

A BOLD STROKE FOR A WIFE.

BY ELLA RODMAN

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THE scenery within reach of the Western Water-Cure was wildly beautiful, and had been made the most of in Dr. Mulbrie's circulars. Hills and dales, water-falls, ravines, miniature forests, winding roads, sheets of water—all in the landscape way that has ever been painted, poetized, or rhapsodized, was there; and whenever the patients could manage to get all their limbs, at one and the same time, free of the watery element that formed so prominent a feature in Dr. Mulbrie's course of treatment, they were very apt to use them on exploring expeditions, picnics, water excursions, and other innocent dissipations. It was not easy, however, under the circumstances, to get a suitable party together at the right time; and since the arrival of Miss Trafton and her niece, there had been less than usual of the kind going on.

Mrs. Lellworth declared it to be a great shame that Helen had seen so little of the surrounding country; and when the hasheesh excitement had fairly subsided, a very nice little expedition was devised, with the assistance of Mr. Rogers—in regard to which that gentleman entertained certain evil designs of his own.

A large wagon was to be chartered to convey the party to a certain point, whence a small steamer started on a pleasure trip to a fairy island; and a great number of sail-boats and row-boats went the same way. Mr. Rogers' proposition was that the party generally should take the steamer, while he reserved to himself the pleasure of conducting Miss Helen Trafton and her aunt in one of the numerous sail-boats.

Helen rather demurred to this arrangement—she was afraid it would “look particular;” but Miss Sybilla, who was quite taken with it, said, “Nonsense!” and “Was not *her* presence sufficient?” So Helen yielded, not at all unwillingly, it must be admitted; and Mr. Rogers went privately in search of a particularly trusty boatman to “run them over the water.”

Long and absorbing was the conference between the lover and the son of Neptune; but, finally, the latter observed,

“I think we can fetch it, sir—is the old lady very heavy?”

Words of which Miss Sybilla was mercifully spared the hearing; and if she had heard them, she certainly would not have known what to make of them.

The day was perfection—delicious September weather; and somebody said, what somebody always does say on similar occasions, that “If they had tried, they could not have found a day better suited to their purpose.”

Mrs. Lellworth made her appearance in an exceedingly funny, flapping sort of hat, that was evidently intended for use rather than ornament, and offered a strange contrast to Helen's jaunty “turban.”

“That's of no manner of use to you,” said Mrs. Lellworth, comically, while the straw edifice on her head vibrated with the impulsive shake, “because I do not see the necessity of making yourself any prettier than you were; and a gilt butterfly, or a knot of blue ribbon, would give the same amount of shade. I am glad the doctor is not going with us, for I am sure he would become more silly than ever—and I really cannot answer for Mr. Rogers under the circumstances.”

Mr. Rogers, just then approaching, would have given much to know what brought that vivid blush to Helen Trafton's cheek, illuminating her pale, beautiful face with a sunset-glow, that lingered, however, longer than sunset glories do.

Mr. Mintley waved the party rather a melancholy farewell, as the large wagon was to be his sole experience of the excursion, and said that he “Was looking forward to the day when Mrs. Mintley would be able to enjoy such pleasures.”

“That man must have the organ of hope very largely developed,” observed Mr. Rogers, while assisting the ladies to their seats in the boat: “for it does not appear to me that Mrs. Mintley is capable of enjoying anything.”

“What a libel!” laughed Helen. “She really does enjoy boiling hot tea.”

“Mr. Mintley is a de-voted husband,” said Miss Sybilla, with much emphasis; “quite an example, I think.”

Again Helen blushed in a very beautifying manner; and Mr. Rogers, feeling somehow

rebuked by Miss Sybilla, scarcely knew what to say.

He whispered something to the boatman, to which that worthy responded, "Ay, ay, sir!" and presently, they were gliding swiftly along with a brisk wind, and the river flashing and sparkling in the warm September sunshine.

"I never get on the water," said Helen, dreamily, "without thinking that I am to stay there forever. This gentle, monotonous gliding seems incapable of change; and I scarcely wish for it. I really envy people who have to live a great deal on the water."

"Raftsmen, for instance?" inquired the gentleman. "I do not think their style of life would exactly suit a refined young lady. Cleopatra's little excursion, with the silver oars, and purple sails, and music, and incense, would have been far more attractive."

"Indeed, you mistake!" exclaimed Helen, enthusiastically; "I have a perfect contempt for effeminacy in any shape—and I do so love adventure! Those very raftsmen, floating between Canadian forests, with their canopy of stars at night, and the hush and stillness of silence wrapping them round like a mantle, and such beautiful sights by day, are, in my opinion, most highly favored men. The world must seem so much larger than it does to us."

"And yet," replied Mr. Rogers, with the slightly quizzical expression that men seem to think it behooves them to wear when a woman waxes warm in behalf of daring and adventure, "they seldom appreciate their advantages. At night, instead of the unsubstantial canopy and mantle that you would assign, they are far more alive to the advantages of a good, thick blanket, and the benefits of a sound night's rest; and by day, they are apt to be meditating the value of their load, or cooking their meals."

The flush had not died out of Helen's face as she stooped over and plunged her hand in the water; and the owner of the eyes that regarded her so attentively, losing not one grace of person or movement, sat thinking of "Undine" and the coral necklace, and wondering if the sea-nymph could have equaled the loveliness before him.

Even the weather-beaten boatman stole sheepish glances at "the trim little gal in the boy's cap, who looked as if she had real grit in her," and he soon came to the conclusion that his good-looking employer was "regularly in for it."

"Dodge a moment, please," said Mr. Rogers, as he saw the abomination that seems to be always in motion in sail-boats veering over toward them.

A shriek from Miss Sybilla, as she suddenly "went below" in such good earnest that it was almost impossible to get her up again. Helen, too, seemed inclined to play partridge much longer than was necessary; and there ensued a chronic skirmish between "the things," as Miss Sybilla termed it, and the uneasy passengers.

"It seems very singular," said the elder lady, with a severe look at the boatman, "that sail-boats cannot be constructed without such a nuisance as that!"

"I don't know, ma'am," replied the man, good-naturedly, "how you'd make a sail-boat without a sail."

"But why can't the sail stay in its place?" persisted Miss Sybilla, "instead of flying about in this fashion, and knocking people's heads off?"

Helen tried dutifully not to laugh; and Mr. Rogers' mustache just quivered a little.

The boatman was evidently embarrassed at sustaining so large a share of the conversation; and he had just commenced, "Why, you see, ma'am——" when, suddenly, there was a great noise and cheering—and the triumphant steamer passed them in the most saucy manner imaginable.

"How slow they are!" said Mrs. Lellworth, gazing after the sailing party. "We shall be at the rendezvous some time before them."

"Of course," said Miss Tweedy, rather ill-naturedly; "they are in no particular hurry—we shall, probably, have to wait an hour or two for them, at least."

"Now, Lucilla," remonstrated her friend, "none of that, if you please. The proprieties are all observed in this case—the maiden aunt alone is sufficient of a guard, and there is the boatman besides. I do love to see young people enjoy themselves; and if Mr. Rogers prefers Miss Trafton's society, and she prefers his, whose business is it, I should like to know?"

"The preference has been rather evident on Miss Trafton's part, for some time past," rejoined the other lady. "One would scarcely suppose they had known each other for so short a time."

"Perhaps they haven't," said Mrs. Lellworth, coolly. "You needn't turn your face into an exclamation point, Lucilla—I have nothing to communicate; but, for all that we know, Miss Trafton and Mr. Rogers may have been acquainted from babyhood. Whether they have or not, however, does not concern us; and it is the most natural thing in the world for the only handsome young man in a party to devote himself to the only pretty young girl."

Miss Tweedy tossed her head at this, and murmured something about "mental attractions;" but Mrs. Lellworth laughed, and said, "Pooh!" and dropped the subject for another.

Miss Tweedy, however, allowed her thoughts to dwell on the select party in the sail-boat; and being gifted with a vivid imagination, she conjured up a picture of Helen sitting with downcast eyes, and Mr. Rogers bending in a lover-like manner over her, while Miss Sybilla looked obligingly out over the water, and the sturdy boatman had eyes only for his bark.

The picture was not an agreeable one; for Miss Tweedy had gotten up a great admiration for Mr. Rogers, and endeavored, on various occasions, to converse with him on abstruse subjects, with the desire of convincing him of the superiority of "mental attractions." But the gentleman, though respectfully polite, was not at all interested, and wore quite a different expression of countenance from that with which he listened to Helen's vapid nothings. Miss Tweedy was sure that they *were* vapid nothings, although she had never heard them; for the young lady had a low, gentle voice—affected, Miss Tweedy pronounced it, and pitched low purposely, so that Mr. Rogers would have to bend close to hear what, after all, was not worth hearing.

The remembrance of these grievances affected Miss Tweedy unpleasantly; so much so that she caught herself wondering whether, as a general thing, sail-boats were not dangerous? And suppose that the party were really turned out into the water? And whether, in that case, Mr. Rogers would be sufficiently devoted to save Helen? Or would he look out for himself, and leave the lady to do the best she could?

"It seems to me," said Miss Sybilla, anxiously, "that the boat acts very queerly, shaking us all around in this strange style! Are you quite sure it is safe?"

"The *boat* is safe enough," replied the man.

"You are not afraid, Helen?" whispered her companion. "If the boat should upset, you have nothing to fear. It is but a short distance to the shore, on either side; and I am an excellent swimmer, and so is our friend, the boatman. We could each save one besides ourselves—and you know who would be *my* first care."

"That sounds dreadfully like preparation," said Helen, laughing a little merrily. "I hope you don't think we are in any danger?"

"Danger!" screamed Miss Sybilla, with a sudden, nervous movement. "Who says there is any danger? Do tell the man to put into land immediately!"

"Take care, ma'am," warned "the man," "you will upset the boat, if you fling around in that manner."

Helen turned fearfully white, and Miss Sybilla screamed; the boat *was* upset—and the next moment, they were struggling in the water.

A fresh-colored, sturdy-looking man in shirt-sleeves was working away vigorously at a broken fence, when a small, dark woman, in a huge sun-bonnet, came to the door of the cottage, and screamed in a high-pitched, shrill voice,

"Jim! Jim Blakewell! I wish to gracious you'd had two eyes in the back of your head. Can't you see what's goin' on in the river? It's perfectly ridiculous!"

"Susanner," replied the man, deliberately, "I *ain't* got two eyes in the back of my head, and I *can't* see what's goin' on in the water, and I'm too busy, if I could."

"But I tell you that folks are drownin'!" shrieked Mrs. Blakewell, in a white heat of excitement. "Do, for goodness' sake, see if you can't do something for 'em! Where's the boat?"

"Drowning?" repeated the man, as he dropped his tools. "Why couldn't you tell me that at first, Susanner?"

"So I did!" she screamed back; "but you're so awful stupid when a body's in a hurry! Do go somewhere and do something, and be spy about it, too, or it'll be too late!"

And little Mrs. Blakewell capered wildly about, while her husband went down, very deliberately it seemed to her, to the water's edge, and surveyed the position.

"Two men and two women," he murmured; "sail-boat upset, and the men good swimmers. They're all right—Susanner can bring 'em round in no time."

The little woman was now close at his heels, and flew back, at his bidding, to heat water and bring out stores of dry clothes.

"Courage, darling!" whispered Mr. Rogers, grasping tightly the drapery of the rescued damsel, "we are almost there. I shall have saved the life dearer to me than my own."

There was no reply; and putting forth every effort, the strong swimmer battled valiantly with the waves, and soon landed his precious freight.

Rather exhausted with the hard work, and the water that dripped from his clothing, he turned for one glance at the beloved face, and encountered the grateful eyes of Miss Sybilla!

"How can I ever thank you," she murmured, "for saving my life?"

He turned abruptly from her, and saw the

honest boatman just depositing his fair burden on the grass.

"Oh, Lennox!" whispered the thoroughly-drenched and half-conscious damsel, "I am afraid I can never repay you!"

"My name ain't Lennox, Miss," grinned the man; "but it don't matter—and as to pay, it's been a pleasure."

People do get so strangely mixed up when they are upset; and two of the party, at least, were anything but satisfied with the result.

Mr. Rogers' brow was decidedly clouded, and he repulsed rather ungraciously Miss Sybilla's profuse thanks; but Mr. Blakewell's hospitable offer was not to be despised, and the drenched party thankfully received the comforts provided for them.

The ladies retired into Mrs. Blakewell's room, and exchanged their wet garments for dry clothing that did not fit them quite so well; Miss Sybilla, in particular, being a head taller than her kind hostess, had rather an overgrown look in the dress that scarcely reached her feet.

Mr. Rogers was quite metamorphosed in a homespun suit of Mr. Blakewell's; but the boatman, shaking himself like a huge Newfoundland dog, professed to be "as good as new," and declined any change of raiment. He went in quest of the missing boat; and during a parting interview with Mr. Rogers, he observed,

"Well, master, I done *my* dooty; but things didn't seem to work jist right, somehow. I hain't no call to complain, though, for I certainly got the best of the bargain. Couldn't stop to pick and choose, you know—had to grab the first one that came handy."

Mr. Rogers silently admitted the truth of these remarks, but did not altogether relish the look of fun in the man's eye.

"I declare to gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Blakewell, after hearing an account of the shipwreck, "I do think the way you was capsize'd was really ridic'ulous! Goin' a pleasin', too, and half drowned—it jist beats all!"

And she flew around among saucepans and gridirons with renewed vigor. Such a brisk, perpetual-motion little woman the party had never encountered before; she seemed strung on wires, and did fifty things at the same time, talking all the while with most surprising ease and agility.

She was evidently under the impression that no one could do anything but herself; and when her husband, rather awkwardly, but good-naturedly, proffered his services in some laborious duty, she pushed him unceremoniously away, with,

"Get out of the way, Jim, do! You *know* that you don't know anything."

"I should think I was *big* enough to do such a thing as that," said Mr. Blakewell, in rather a mortified tone.

"Of course you are," replied his wife, rattling around; "and so's a cow big enough to ketch a mouse, but I never heerd of her doin' it."

Mr. Blakewell was silenced, and rather sheepishly took his departure; while the visitors sat watching the brisk, little woman, and listened to the observations that fell so rapidly from her lips.

"Of course you'll want a cup of tea?" she said, talking to herself rather than to her guests; and when they protested against their giving so much trouble, the vivacious hostess exclaimed,

"'Tain't no trouble in the world, and tea's reel comfortin'. I always say that, if you've got four things cookin' on a stove, you might as well have five—and I won't give in for cookin' to the best of 'em."

So, she took off lids and put them on again, and poked the fire, and opened the oven-doors, and shut them with a bang, and rescued things in the very act of boiling over, and fried, and baked, and boiled, and was all the time the merest atom of a woman that ever held the reins of domestic power.

The room in which all this took place, and which seemed to be dining-room, kitchen, and sitting-room, all in one, was a pleasant, sunshiny apartment, with three windows, one looking off to the water; the freshest of all rag-carpeted floors; the brightest of all painted chairs; and a forest of asparagus-tops on the mantle. The heat of the cooking-stove was very agreeable to the chilled party; and even the ungainly-looking article itself was rather ornamental from its extreme neatness. The surface spoke eloquently of blacking, and every tin utensil was scoured to the last degree of brightness. Not a speck of dirt was to be seen anywhere; and yet the only help visible on the premises was the frightened face of a little "bound girl," that peered occasionally through the door leading to outer regions.

Mrs. Blakewell herself, with her hair tightly screwed in a hard knot at the back of her head, and her close-fitting dress, covering a figure that led people to remark that "there wasn't anything *of* her," was the very picture of a hard-working little housekeeper, and a perfect marvel to all who held her.

"Mother often used to say to me," she

remarked, while laying the table for dinner, "'Jane Elizabeth, I *do* wonder how you ever contrive to git along;' but you see," with great determination, "I *mean* to git along, and I *do* it. I ain't got no time to be sick and complainin'—though I threaten Jim that I'll break down, some day, and lay by a spell."

When dinner was ready, three rosy, black-eyed little girls, and one small boy, walked demurely in from some unknown place, and sat playing propriety all dinner-time—never speaking unless they were spoken to, taking what was given them, and only manifesting a sense of the presence of strangers by a continued, but respectful stare. The girls were pretty little things, with a subdued, Quakerish roguishness of expression, and combined their father's extremely good looks with all the mother's brightness.

Mr. Blakewell was a fine specimen of a country carpenter, grave and dignified; his quick little wife called him "poky"—not above his trade, but thoroughly understanding it, and able to converse so intelligently on that and other subjects, that Mr. Rogers was quite delighted with him.

The two men got on admirably together; while Mrs. Blakewell was quite profuse in her attention to the ladies—declaring all the while, that "the way they ett was reelly ridic'ulous."

At one end of the table was placed a loaf of delicious, homemade bread, equal in size to at least *six* ordinary baker's loaves; at the other end, about three pounds of butter reposed on a plate beside a three-quart pitcher of rich country milk; a home-cured ham of gigantic size formed the center-piece, and was flanked on either side by several dozen boiled eggs and several dozen fried ones. An enormous dish of stewed chicken rested in front of Mrs. Blakewell; and plates of pickles, sauces, and vegetables, filled up the intervening space.

The good woman apologized for "such a dreadful mean dinner," and said that, if she had only known they were coming, she could have done herself some justice.

"We are not accustomed to such abundance as this," said Helen, with a smile, "as we are staying at the Water-Cure, a few miles down the river."

"Well, now, I want to know!" exclaimed the hostess, in amazement, "if that ain't ridic'ulous! Why, you must be starved; that Dr. Mulbrie is the meanest-lookin' feller I ever see, and as close as the next minit. Why, he wouldn't give away so much as a sasser of nothin'!"

Mr. Blakewell looked rather warningly at

his wife; but Mr. Rogers laughed merrily, as he said, "Your insight into character does you great credit, Mrs. Blakewell. I think you have described the doctor exactly."

"I wouldn't go to that feller if I was *dyin'*!" continued the lady, excitedly.

"There wouldn't be no use in goin' *then*, Susanner," remarked her husband, with a humorous twinkle in his eye.

Mrs. Blakewell was obliged to laugh in spite of herself; but, if there be any truth in signs, the proprietor of the Western Water-Cure must have suffered unpleasantly from a burning sensation in his left ear.

After dinner, the visitors began to talk of going in search of a boat for the homeward journey; but Mrs. Blakewell loudly declared that this was "reelly ridic'ulous," and was seconded more quietly by her husband.

"The young lady ain't fit for it," said the hospitable little woman; and Helen certainly looked very pale. "We've got plenty of sleepin' room, and plenty to eat; and it'll be a reel charity to make us a visit. You want a good night's rest to git over your fright; and in the mornin', when your clothes is all dry, you kin start fresh—that is, if you *will* start."

The youngest and prettiest of the black-eyed darlings nestled up to Helen, and whispered softly, "Please stay, and I'll show you something reel pretty."

"Well," said Helen, "I will; but be sure you keep your promise."

The little one led the way demurely to a snug corner behind the stove, where a small cricket was turned bottom upward, and contained a soft mass of feathered life, carefully covered, in lieu of the hen-mother, with a scrubbing-brush!

Little Josie, in answer to Helen's laughing questions, stoutly declared her belief that the chickens were contented and happy under this novel arrangement; but the little, frightened things seemed to prefer the soft hand which the young lady placed tenderly over them, and in no way manifested any filial affection for the scrubbing-brush.

The afternoon passed very pleasantly; the gentleman reconnoitered the small farm with Mr. Blakewell; and the ladies took a good rest, played with the children, and listened to Mrs. Blakewell's communications, reminiscences, and interrogations.

At tea-time, the little woman gave the company the benefit of Mr. Blakewell's courtship from the first moment of meeting down to the formidable crisis of "popping the question"—

although the stalwart carpenter frequently remonstrated, "Oh, Susanner!" or, "There, there, wife, that will do," with his cheeks the color of crimson peonies, and his whole expression decidedly "sheepish."

But Mrs. Blakewell replied sharply, "If you're ashamed of it, Jim Blakewell, I ain't! But a more sheepish-lookin' critter," turning to the visitors, "I never *did* see when I sent him to speak to mother, while I hung over the bannisters and listened. I wasn't a mite sorry for him—and such a goat as he made of himself! mother said she didn't b'lieve the man had an atom of sense. I knew he *had*, though; but I didn't blame mother for thinkin' so. I always had to do all the talkin'—and if it wasn't for me, I'm sure I don't know where he'd be now."

"I think I should be a bachelor, Susanner," replied her husband, demurely.

"No, you wouldn't!" snapped the little woman; "you'd be married to that Sal Podson—that is, if she hadn't fretted you into your grave before this."

"Mobbe I would," said Mr. Blakewell, helping himself to another slice of ham; "Sal was very determined."

"Just hear his conceit!" exclaimed his wife. "But the truth is," confidentially, "Sal *did* just lay herself out for him, and I made up my mind to spite her. Don't b'lieve I should have thought of the man, if *she* hadn't!"

"I'm sure I'm much obliged to you, Susanner," replied her husband, with quiet humor. "Of two evils, I have certainly got the least."

The laugh being decidedly against Mrs. Blakewell, that lady took it very good-naturedly; and evidently looked with much pride upon her substantial husband, whose quiet demeanor was an amusing offset to her own volubility.

Nine o'clock was evidently the family hour for retiring, and Miss Trafton and her niece were conducted up stairs by Mrs. Blakewell. There were two exquisitely neat-looking rooms opening into each other, and furnished with any amount of rag-carpet and patchwork bed-quilts.

Rising suns, stars, and diamonds, were disposed in gay colors on white grounds; and the hostess said, with a smile,

"Many's the pricked finger, and poutin' spell I've worked up in them quilts. Mother b'lieved in bein' industrious; and it did seem, when I was a small girl, as though I never could set down without havin' a patch or two clapped in my hands."

On inquiring the breakfast-hour, they were told, with some hesitation, that it was six o'clock, at which the ladies started involuntarily, and Mrs. Blakewell added kindly,

"But *you* needn't put yourselves out to git up—I know how hard it comes to them that ain't used to it. I can jist as well give you yours at eight—every mite as well."

This decided them that, if it were a possible thing, they would achieve the exploit; and with many thanks for her kindness, they dismissed Mrs. Blakewell for the night.

Down, down they sunk into the feathery depths of the generously-filled bed, until aunt and niece had some doubts of being able to find each other. With much laughing, however, they admitted this feathery wilderness to be a decided improvement upon the hard shelf at the Water-Cure; and the two fell asleep, under the impression that they were to rise somewhere in the middle of the night, in order to be ready for breakfast.

So strong was this feeling upon them, that they descended to the dining-room at an hour that fairly terrified the little bound girl, who was engaged in some duty there; and scampering hastily into the outer kitchen, she announced the astounding fact to her mistress.

On glancing at the clock, they found it just on the stroke of five; and in came Mrs. Blakewell, looking as though she never slept, to console with them on the hour of sleep they had lost.

Six o'clock finally dragged round; and a breakfast as substantial as the dinner and tea was provided by the indefatigable little hostess.

The visitors received many hospitable entreaties to prolong their stay; but they resolutely declined them, and reminded Mr. Blakewell of his promise to provide them with a boat.

"You won't object to its bein' on wheels?" asked that gentleman, as, after a reasonable absence, he reappeared in his Sunday best, and pointed to a substantial vehicle, at the door, with two stout horses.

"Yes, he *was* goin' to drive 'em over, and it wouldn't be no trouble in creation, not a mite. He should think that ladies who had been upst would be skeery of the water for a spell; and, besides, he had an errand in Western, and now was as good a time to do it as any."

All compensation was resolutely declined; but, as they were leaving, Mrs. Blakewell whispered to Helen, that "If she would jest drop her a few lines, some time when she hadn't nothin' better to do, she know'd they'd be worth

gitting—though, to be sure, 'twas reelly ridic'ulous to ask it."

"You will certainly hear from me," said Helen, significantly, which seemed to make the little woman supremely happy.

"Well," said Mr. Rogers, as they went at a good, brisk pace along the pleasant country road, "this is one of the most delightful adventures I ever met with; and I am sure the ladies will say the same."

The ladies warmly assented; and the gentleman, turning to Mr. Blakewell, continued,

"You really cannot imagine how refreshing it is for people, accustomed to the stiffness and restraint of city life, to drop down, as we have done, in such a cozy, rural nest—it is like taking a deep draught of pure water."

"Well," replied Mr. Blakewell, deliberately, "we *do* have a purty good time, now, that's a fact. Me and Susanner hitch along together right comfortable—that little woman's worth her weight in gold, though I say it that shouldn't say it. The farm works well, and we all hev our health, and plenty to eat and drink ourselves, and some to spare for others. He that wants more's welcome to it."

As the worthy carpenter had nothing more to say, he said it for the remainder of the journey; and dropped his companions at the Western Water-Cure with the most laconic of farewells.

Mr. Rogers grasped his hand warmly, and reiterated his thanks for their hospitable entertainment, which only had the effect of making Mr. Blakewell appear what his wife would have called "a sheepish-lookin' critter."

Exclamations and interrogations met the truants on all sides; but the boatman having, according to agreement, conveyed the news of the disaster to the steamboat party, their whereabouts had been very generally known.

Dr. Mulbrie looked particularly solemn, as though he felt it to be his duty to be displeased, while congratulating them on their escape from drowning, and a fit of illness after the exposure; but Helen laughingly replied that they were, probably, hardened by the soakings they had received at the establishment.

The magic word "letters" banished all other topics; and the ladies retired to their rooms to peruse their respective epistles.

Both contained bad news; Helen's was from her step-mother, who wrote in evident perplexity, saying that Mr. Trafton had been very *queer* lately, and not in good health, and it might be well for Helen to return home as soon as possible; the other, from Miss Clarissa, gave

the information of Miss Pamela's withdrawal from the family mansion to that of Dr. Tormesbury.

Both aunt and niece were very much excited over the contents of their letters; but it was soon decided that Helen must go home at once, and that Miss Sybilla must go with her. No amount of expostulation could turn Mrs. Tormesbury back to Miss Pamela Trafton—but Helen's presence might yet be a comfort to her poor, suffering father; and in much heaviness of spirit, the young lady began to pack her trunk.

Miss Sybilla went in quest of the proprietor, to inform him of their sudden decision; and, on the way, she met Mr. Rogers, who was also in a high state of excitement. She immediately communicated the unwelcome news to him, and he replied with subdued delight,

"I also have received a sudden call; and as my road lies in your direction, perhaps you and Miss Helen will allow me the pleasure of conducting you to Chicago?"

The lady gave a ready consent; Mr. Rogers had always been a favorite, and now he possessed the additional merit of having saved her life.

"Oh, aunt! what *have* you done?" exclaimed Helen, in dismay, on hearing that Mr. Rogers was to be their escort. "And what *will* papa say?"

Miss Sybilla looked puzzled, for there was evidently much behind this that she did not understand; and Helen suddenly resolved to make a confidant of her aunt, and tell her the whole affair.

"Poor child!" murmured the tender-hearted lady, with an affectionate kiss, "we *have* all been in the dark, indeed—if you had only told me this before, Helen!"

"Oh, aunt, I couldn't!" was the hasty reply. "I should not have mustered courage to speak of it now, only that it seemed necessary—and I am really dreading to hear what papa will say."

"Leave 'papa' to me," said Miss Sybilla, impressively; for in the good lady's mind had suddenly dawned a nice little plot for "bringing things right," and she was evidently quite confident of success.

Helen made no inquiries, but went on expeditiously with her preparations.

The departure of Miss Trafton and her niece caused universal regret in the establishment; and Mrs. Mintley actually shed tears over them, which seemed to be the only service she was capable of performing for her friends. Mrs. Tellworth said more ridiculous things than ever in order to hide her real feelings. She pro-

fessed to weep bitterly over Mr. Rogers, and begged for a lock of his hair in the most ridiculous manner. Mr. Mintley seemed quite inconsolable; but Dr. Mulbrie was not visible after the business transactions were over.

Phoebe threw an old shoe after the travelers for good luck; and amid blessings, and kind wishes, they began their journey. There was an indescribable airiness about Miss Sybilla, and an evident expectation of pleasant things to come, for she did not consider her brother's illness dangerous; but Helen was full of forebodings, for she had always been accustomed to see her father in perfect health.

By Miss Sybilla's request, Dr. Clemdale (for he had entirely ceased to be "Mr. Rogers") accompanied them to the house, where he was received almost rapturously by Mrs. Trafton.

"I am so glad you have come!" she exclaimed. "Mr. Trafton has just been seized with a terrible fit, and our doctor has gone out of town. You can have no idea of my uneasiness."

He could not, indeed; for in addition to a wife's natural disquietude on the occasion, Mrs. Trafton had all the added suffering of fearing that her husband had not made his will, and that he would not recover his senses to do so. In view of this fearful contingency, her animosity to Lennox Clemdale was quite forgotten, and she hailed him almost as a delivering angel.

The sick man was fearfully changed; and Helen was not allowed, at first, to go to her father. Dr. Clemdale, however, understood the case before him thoroughly, and worked hard and faithfully to restore suspended consciousness.

At length Mr. Trafton opened his eyes, and gazed feebly around. The only person he saw was the young physician.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, more in surprise than anger.

"I was called in to your assistance by Mrs. Trafton," said the young man, composedly; "your family physician is out of town."

"Then I suppose I owe my life to you?" continued Mr. Trafton.

"I do not like to say that," was the reply; "although you would, in all probability, have died without medical assistance."

"Of course I would—I'm not an idiot. Where is Helen?"

"In the drawing-room, with her aunt."

"Let them both come up here."

Helen tried hard to show no emotion at her father's altered face—but it was a very difficult task.

"Brother," whispered Miss Sybilla, full of her plan, "I hope you will treat Dr. Clemdale well, for my sake—he saved my life."

"He seems to be a general life-preserver," growled Mr. Trafton, "as he has just done the same service for me. I think, however, that I have it in my power to reward him. "Now," said he, addressing the gentleman in question, "have you got over that nonsense yet about Helen?"

"No, sir!" was the prompt reply; "and I never *shall* get over it. Neither time nor circumstances can change my feelings in the slightest degree."

"And you, Helen—have you gotten over your nonsense?"

The young lady's cheek was the color of a damask rose; but she replied very firmly, though in a low tone,

"No, sir."

Lennox Clemdale found himself close beside her, with a sudden feeling that he had a *right* to be there.

The expression of Mr. Trafton's face was hard to decipher, as he continued: "Suppose that I should withdraw my disapproval of the match—would you promise to follow my directions *implicitly*?"

After a moment's pause, the lovers agreed, although Helen had an undefined dread of something startling; nor was she at all relieved when her father dispatched one of the servants for their rector.

"Oh, father!" pleaded Helen, "this is so very sudden!"

"Not a word!" was the reply. "Delays are dangerous; and I may not always feel in the humor, you know."

A gleam of cunning in the sick man's eye, and indications of high fever, did not escape Dr. Clemdale's notice. The latter bore up wonderfully under the sudden shock; and when the clergyman arrived, Mr. Trafton merely said,

"I wish you to marry my daughter to this gentleman as soon as possible. I do not require your services yet."

The clergyman was a little surprised at the scene, but he offered no objection; and while Lennox Clemdale supported the half-fainting bride, the two were made one in a very short space of time.

Both were rather staggered at the suddenness of their happiness; but poor Miss Sybilla was fairly shocked at what seemed to her a total ignoring of the proprieties; and she wondered how many more of the Trafton family

would scandalize their relatives in the way of matrimonial vagaries.

"Now," said Mr. Trafton, when they were again left to themselves, "I wish to inform you, Lennox Clemdale, before you hear it elsewhere, that, if you have only married the rich man's daughter, you have got nothing for your pains. Trafton & Romer failed this morning—and that is why I am lying here."

A genuine, unaffected shriek from Mrs. Trafton, who was carried out in strong hysterics.

"Oh, papa!" murmured Helen, overcome with shame and horror at her father's duplicity.

Her husband whispered some magical words that soothed her excitement; and then he replied proudly to Mr. Trafton:

"I do not think, sir, that you even *suspect* me of 'marrying the rich man's daughter;' and for my own sake, I can but rejoice if your misfortune has brought me the realization of my dearest hopes. The unexpected death of an uncle has put me in possession of a fortune that will enable me to provide my wife with a home equal to that from which I take her; and that you should so early have bestowed upon me this happiness, I cannot sufficiently thank you."

His face was beaming with love and pride; and Mr. Trafton saw that every word was spoken from an honest heart. He began to realize his son-in-law's virtues—being very much aided in this proceeding by the announcement of this unexpected fortune. After all, Helen, for whom he had been chiefly troubled, would not suffer by his loss—and this lightened the load wonderfully.

"I am glad," said he, to his wife, when that lady had recovered herself, "I am really glad that I have provided so well for my daughter."

"But what is to become of *us*?" asked Mrs. Trafton, rather warmly. "What is to become of *me*?"

"Oh!" replied the merchant, rather sentimentally, "we can join hands and stand under a tree."

As Mrs. Trafton had never been educated to this sort of life, she could not be expected to "take to it" very kindly at that period of her existence; and an angry rustle of her silk dress warned her husband of her abrupt departure.

Miss Sybilla Trafton began her homeward journey with the painful conviction that her home was no longer what it had been. The long-unbroken trio was changed to a duet; and when she thought of the still greater change to

Pamela, her mind was filled with many misgivings.

But when she approached the well-known house, there stood *two* figures, instead of one, to greet her; and Pamela herself, with the same manner as of old, would have fallen at her feet for a "scene," had not Miss Sybilla prevented her.

"You are not really angry, then?" murmured the interesting suppliant, as though she had been about eighteen, and Miss Sybilla her offended parent.

The good lady, thus appealed to, rather wondered, on the whole, if she had ever thought of being angry; and at this juncture Dr. Tormesbury appeared, looking so beaming and brotherly, that it did really seem to the perplexed traveler as if things might have been much worse than they were.

The offenders and the offended had a very pleasant evening of it; and even Miss Clarissa came to the conclusion that a brother-in-law did not exactly come under the head of gorilla, where she had placed him. All Centerdom thought it an excellent thing that *one* of the "three old maids," at least, had furnished herself with a protector, to the manifest advantage of the remaining two; but with respect to the *manner* of doing it, poor Miss Pamela's escapade was not inaptly compared to the unexpected antics of a staid old horse.

Mr. Trafton never fully recovered his health, nor the impaired faculties of his mind; and Mrs. Trafton spent her time in dwelling upon her former grandeur, to all who would listen, and bemoaning her present misfortunes. She expatiated, at great length, upon the charms and virtues of "my daughter, Mrs. Clemdale," and professed great pride in the doctor; but people who knew something of the past were very apt to smile a little at these allusions.

Mr. and Mrs. Blakewell were intensely astonished, one day, a month or two after the departure of their visitors, by hearing that a huge parcel awaited them at the railroad depot; and the worthy carpenter, with characteristic deliberation, spent an entire evening in wondering over it, before he could be persuaded by his active little helpmate to go in quest of it.

When Mr. Blakewell returned from his expedition, he carried a good-sized box, which contained a beautiful shawl for Mrs. Blakewell, crocheted by Helen's own fair hands, a substantially-bound copy of Shakespeare for Mr. Blakewell—the gift of "Mr. Rogers"—and some books and games for the children, that

sent these young persons into a perfect fever-heat of excitement. Even the frightened little "bound girl" was not forgotten; and the "Wonderful History of Little Red-Ridinghood," full of lovely pictures, enlarged her eyes to such a degree, during the intervals snatched from work, that they assumed a chronic stare which quite terrified the redoubtable Mrs. Blakewell.

But the gem of the collection was a charming little epistle from Helen, in which she very prettily thanked "her kind entertainers" for the pleasure they had given her, and begged them to accept these little remembrances as tokens of their sincere regard.

The sudden changing of the pronouns from

singular to plural, and the signature, "Helen Clemdale," at first perplexed the little woman; but, with a sudden, "My sakes, *me!* If this don't beat all!" she burst into a fit of laughter.

It took some time to enlighten Mr. Blakewell as to the true state of the case; and then, instead of being properly surprised, he remarked, with great deliberation, that "He didn't know as he had anythin' agin' it."

Mrs. Blakewell was intensely gratified, and wrapped herself in the shawl, and surveyed it from all points of view; then she examined the Shakspeare, and all the other gifts, and took another reading of the letter, and warmed up declaring that, "after all, it did seem really ridic'lous!"

A HEARTBREAKER OF CHINCAPIN.

BY HOWARD SEELY, AUTHOR OF "A NYMPH OF THE WEST,"
"A LONE STAR BO-PEEP," ETC.

HR-R-RR-RRR!

It was a singular sound—
not unlike the rapid uncoiling
of a broken clock-spring.
I checked my horse abruptly.
There was nothing to be seen
on the trail-road ahead—
nothing in the scant heat-laden mesquite thicket
beyond. The way was dusty, the sunlight blind-
ing, the air breathless. I had recourse to my
pocket-flask for inspiration.

Ghrrr! gh-r-rr! ghr-rr-rrr-rrrr!

This time there could be no mistake. I
dropped my flask and struck my pony sharply
with my riding-quirt. He sprang into the air
as if about to leap some obstacle. At the same
moment, I felt him shudder beneath me from a
blow delivered with such force that the shock
was communicated to my saddle. A second
later, he halted suddenly, trembling from head
to foot as if stricken with the ague.

There was no help for it. My predicament
dawned upon me at once. With a sudden sense
of helplessness, I realized that I was thirty
miles from home, and that my horse had been
bitten by a rattlesnake.

Nevertheless, I was on my feet in an instant.
I whipped out my pocket-knife, and, before poor
"Concho" was aware of what I was up to. I
had lanced the wound, setting it to bleeding
freely. Then I threw the bridle over his neck
and turned back upon my steps, hoping to
discover the reptile that had caused so much
mischief.

It was some time before my efforts were
successful. Hidden in the short "curly mes-
quite" grass, and almost identical with it in
color, the hideous creature lay coiled, ready to
spring. Its broad triangular head was held
erect and turned backward upon its folds,
regarding my movements intently, while it
incessantly darted backward and forward its
tremulous vibrating tongue. So suddenly did I
come upon it, that for a few seconds I halted
breathless as if fascinated. Then I began
searching about for a stick or a stone with
which to do battle with his snakeship.

Now, the singular thing about encounters with
snakes upon our Texan prairies is this: that it is

almost impossible to find a missile with which to
open the attack. At such times, it seems as if
the ground had been picked clean of every-
thing aggressive. Moreover, should you be so
fortunate as to chance upon anything, it is ten
to one that, in the excitement of the moment,
you will not be able to hit the reptile at first, and
the combat results in a helter-skelter skirmish,
during which it is necessary to use great care to
avoid stepping upon the snake in recovering the
object thrown.

I had been so foolish as to set out upon my
journey without a revolver, and, being now
reduced to the expedient of searching for some
natural weapon, I was quartering over the
ground as carefully as though walking on eggs,
when an equestrian shadow fell across my path,
and I was hailed suddenly:

"Oh, stranger!"

I looked up. A young girl, mounted on a
brown mustang, was regarding me attentively.
She wore a purple jersey, which served at once
to clothe and enhance the curves of a mature yet
girlish figure. Her dress was of plaid woolen
stuff. A bright-colored worsted cap—similar to
those known at the North as "Tam O'Shanters"
—covered her head, beneath which her long
dark hair escaped and tossed upon her shoul-
ders. I caught a glimpse of a silver spur
attached to the boot which peeped rather
saucily from beneath her habit. My eye had
scarcely taken in these details of her costume
when the young woman accosted me:

"What ye got there—a pet?"

"Something of one—that's a fact," I rejoined.
rather amused at the query, as well as pleased
at the meeting. "Have you a revolver?"

The girl eyed me narrowly a moment, backed
her mustang a few paces, and then, with a toss
of her head and an unmistakable Southern
accent, replied:

"Natchally."

"Lend it to me," I suggested, taking a step
nearer to her and holding out my hand.

She uttered a mocking laugh.

"Not much," she returned, with emphasis,
wheeling her pony around smartly; "if there's
any shootin' to be done in this outfit, I reckon
I'm doin' it!"

"Well," said I, embarrassed as well as amused by this prompt rejoinder, but with the usual masculine contempt for a woman's prowess with the pistol, "there's a big rattlesnake over yonder; if you want to, you can practice away on him."

The girl glanced in the direction I indicated. In a few moments, her quick eye caught sight of the hissing reptile.

"I'll soon fix him!" she said, with a decisive setting of the lips. "Come around here, 'Skeeter'—what's gone with ye?" and she plied both whip and spur upon the unwilling mustang.

But for some time past "Skeeter" had been aware of something dangerous in the neighborhood—something which his timorous nature resented with attent ears and quivering muzzle. Being now urged in the direction in which the danger lay, he became very obstreperous, starting back at every turn, snorting, and otherwise expressing his unwillingness to go forward.

"I reckon I'll have to try him from here," the girl said, at length, drawing rein on the nervous animal. The snake lay coiled a few paces away.

She drew a large six-shooter from its holster in front of her saddle, and, cocking it, took deliberate aim at the reptile.

There was a breathless moment of expectation, then the heavy arm exploded with a shattering report that made the pony start back a pace or two and rear violently. The girl dropped her revolver, in her effort to control her horse. But her aim was, nevertheless, unerring. The rattlesnake was precipitated for some feet over the prairie, where he lay knitting and unknitting his helpless coils. I could hardly repress a cheer at the success of her marksmanship.

The girl gave an exclamation of triumph; then she relaxed sweetly.

"I reckon that settled him," she remarked, gazing down at the dismembered serpent. "See: I shot him plumb in two. Now, pardner, I'll trouble you to hand me that thar six-shooter and to cut off them rattles."

She drew a small hunting-knife from a belt she wore and handed it to me, as she spoke.

I cheerfully complied. With a smart blow of the knife, I severed the rattles from the dead carcass and placed them in the dimpled brown hand she extended to receive them.

"That's the ninth this season," she remarked, complacently, "and, I reckon, the biggest. I expect, someday, to have one of 'em set in silver for a breastpin. How does that strike you?"

I replied that I had seen large rattles set thus, and that the effect was very pretty. Actuated

by an impulse I hardly understood, I advanced a sudden proposition.

"I tell you what I'll do," I said, as the girl turned the rattles about in her hand, shaking them now and then in hopeless rivalry of their dead owner: "You let me have that set, and I'll get them mounted for you over at Fort Worth, the next time I go there—only let me know what name and address to send them to."

"Will ye now?" the girl replied, with a flash of pleased surprise in her bright brown eyes. "Well, that's mighty clever of you, natchally." She tossed the rattles carelessly back to me. "Any time ye find anyone comin' up our way, all ye need do is to tell 'em to leave it for Lil Yancey at the post-office at Chincapin. Everybody knows me, and the postmaster is very careful of anything that's left for me. They comes along of bein' rather gone on me, I reckon."

I overlooked this frank statement of Miss Yancey's, as I carefully wrote down name and address in a pocket-notebook.

"Ye needn't write that all down," the young woman remonstrated, evidently in some alarm at my formality. "Though, for the matter of that, it's all over town; and sometimes it comes in right smart handy. We're so far away here, and news don't get to us very reg'lar. Jes' now, paw and maw hev gone down to Chincapin, to spend a day or two, and I'm left all alone at the ranch. Bein' sorter lonely, I reckoned I'd take a 'pasenr' on my own account."

She paused to ascertain if I grasped her facts. Finding that I did so, she was apparently about to enlighten me still further in regard to domestic matters, when her gaze fell upon my luckless mustang.

"My grief!" she ejaculated, her eyes dilating with surprise. "Why, pardner, what's gone with yer horse? He looks like he was in pretty bad fix."

I turned and regarded poor Concho. He was standing exactly where I had left him, and was indeed a most pitiful spectacle. The poison had already encroached upon his forelegs, distorting those members from their true proportions. The muscles of his chest were so abnormally swollen, that the flesh lay in huge folds, falling down and giving him the ludicrous effect of having hastily assumed a pair of trousers that were much too large for him. His lower jaw had dropped helplessly, and the wretched animal was overcome by a spasmodic and convulsive shuddering.

The girl regarded the mustang for a few moments with breathless interest; then she turned quickly to me.

"Did that thar rattler bite yer pony?" she inquired.

"I should think he did."

"How far do you live from here?"

"About thirty miles."

Miss Yancey indulged in a long whistle of amazement.

"Well," she said, finally, "ez near ez I can get to it, pardner, you've got verself pretty well bogged."

I nodded.

"How do ye reckon to get home?"

I shook my head.

"Ye don't allow to walk that distance—do ye?"

"I cannot say."

Hereupon, the girl raised one hand to her face and inspected me narrowly, as if she thought I might be some natural curiosity; then she turned and glanced at the blanket in the rear of her saddle. There was an awkward pause. Miss Yancey was evidently making up her mind to say something, and I bore her embarrassing scrutiny with commendable composure.

"Can you ride pick-a-back?" she asked, at last, coloring very visibly.

I looked up at the fresh young face smiling above me. She had doffed the worsted cap, and, her hair released from this—apparently its only confinement—had tumbled down in rippling confusion all over her neck and shoulders. Her eyes—large, dark, and lustrous—were gazing down into mine with an eager expression. Her lips, parted slightly, were wreathed in a roguish smile.

Although hitherto unused to this romantic mode of progression, I was instantly inspired with a desire to experience it. Undoubtedly, I could ride "pick-a-back."

"Well, then, jump up behind me here, and I'll take ye over home."

"But what shall I do with my horse?"

"I reckon ye needn't do very much with him," she replied, carelessly. "Ye might lead him down thar to thet water-hole, take his saddle off, and stand him in the water. The'll cool the bite some; time'll do the rest. Don't fret yerself; he won't stray none; ye'll find him in the same place to-morrow. They're always took like thet. It'll be three days sure before he'll be fit for the road."

"And how about the saddle?"

"No one'll touch it. We can come down and get it to-morrow."

I made no further objection, but complied with her directions, inwardly rejoicing at this easy way out of my former difficulty.

Meanwhile, Miss Lillian began to be impatient.

"Shake it up a little, pardner, and don't keep me a-waitin'."

Thus adjured, I sprang up behind my fair deliverer, and, not without some embarrassment, threw one arm about the slender waist in front of me.

Miss Lillian was evidently undisturbed by any misgivings.

"Hang on tight," she directed, as she lashed into a gallop her fleet little pony.

II.

As we drew near the Yancey ranch, we became aware of the presence of visitors. Several saddled horses were tethered to the low rail fence enclosing the dooryard, and upon the top rail of the same a group of individuals was seated, in various attitudes of disappointment and dejection.

Miss Yancey brought her mustang to a halt with a gesture of irritation.

"Who are these men?" I inquired, glancing curiously at them over her shoulder.

She gave a deep sigh before replying, and was evidently much disconcerted.

"I reckon," she said, glancing back at me slyly, "I reckon they're my bos."

"Is this a regular thing?" I inquired, in some amusement, looking from one to another of the occupants of the rail fence. "I should think they would interfere somewhat."

There were four on the fence.

"They do," Lillian responded; "they're not a bit good friends. I hev all I can do sometimes to keep them from half-killing one another. Oh, dear!" she exclaimed, wringing her hands in perplexity. "To think, when I had laid off to have a pleasant visit from you, thet they should all hev come in a bunch! I'm afraid they won't like your bein' here at all. It's jes' dreadful!"

While inwardly alarmed at her candid preference for my own society, I expressed a reasonable amount of regret for this unanimous sociability. Several times, in the course of my singular ride, I had feared I detected similar symptoms in Miss Yancey. My position was becoming critical.

"Why don't you have different days for each of them?" I hazarded, cheerfully avoiding the issue.

"I do gen'rally; but, ye see, to-day they all know thet paw and maw hev gone visitin', and they've each taken a day off to come and see me. I reckon all we can do is to face the music."

This we accordingly did. Miss Yancey accepted the situation with characteristic brusqueness.

"Well, boys," she shouted, riding forward, "I reckon ye've come over, natchally, to help me get supper. Glad to see all of ye. Reckon it's onnecessary to say thet paw and maw hev gone off on a little 'pasear.' Sorry to hev been out when ye first got here; but, ye see, this here stranger hez met with an accident to his hoss, and I had to take him under my protection. Howdy?"

At this spirited address, the amatory contingent of Chinapin unwound themselves from the rail fence and came forward to assist Miss Lilian in dismounting. But the active young equestrienne disdained such aid. Rapidly disengaging her foot from the stirrup, she slipped from the saddle. She leaned against her pony, holding the bridle-rein in both hands, and scrutinized carefully the approaching group.

The foremost was a tall man, dark-bearded and heavy-browed; his hands were stained and discolored with the marks of his calling, and, when I noted the cords and muscles of his brawny arms, I had little difficulty in classing him at once as the village blacksmith. Next to him was a long lean man of cadaverous aspect, who, at first sight, seemed all bones and joints—a man who, when seated upon the rail fence, shut up like a double-bladed jack-knife, and unfolded himself in his descent with evident pain and an apparent rustiness at the hinges. He was romantically clad in a pair of green trousers and a red shirt. I was instinctively aware of the custodian of the United States Mail. The third man was so short and so ill-favored in appearance, that I had almost overlooked him in the gap between the postmaster and No. 4. He made up for the insignificance of his appearance by being faultlessly dressed after the border fashion, and his presence exhaled and diffused a suffocating odor of bergamot. This scented individual was the village barber. In the last personage, I recognized the unquestionable characteristics of an unfettered frontier press. The gentlemanly editor was in his shirt-sleeves, and was occupied in whittling a stick.

Lilian received them all with indiscriminate cordiality, and introduced me in due form. The ceremony was in each case reciprocated by an uncivil recognition or a surly nod. Before I had dismounted, I realized that my presence was uniformly regarded as an intrusion, and that it would have been intensely gratifying to all parties if the earth had suddenly opened and swallowed me up.

But Miss Yancey overlooked this apparent coolness with her characteristic brusquerie.

She surrendered her mustang to me with orders to feed him and put him at once in the stable.

"Give him only six ears of corn," she directed, "and be careful to shuck it for him, ez he's got the lampers pretty bad already. Come, boys," she continued, turning to the others, "it's gettin' late, and we've got supper to get."

She picked up her riding-whip, which had fallen to the ground during her recent cordiality, and turned in the direction of the ranch, followed by her nondescript train of admirers.

The sun was setting when I completed my labors. The kitchen windows of the ranch were already crimson with his departing glories as I sought the doorway and craved admittance.

"Come right in, Mr. Brown, and make yourself at home," Miss Yancey enjoined, rushing to the portal with charming hospitality. Her cheeks were glowing with the heat of the fire; the sleeves of her jersey were rolled above her dimpled elbows, and there was a dab of flour across her retroussé little nose which gave a certain piquancy to her trim housewifely figure.

I dropped into a seat, with my eyes absorbed in these domestic preparations; but I soon saw that Miss Yancey's labors were mainly executive. With admirable prudence, she had distributed the cuisine among her lovers. The lean and melancholy postmaster was engaged in setting the kitchen table; the editor, being already partially prepared for a higher temperature, manipulated the frying-pan and sliced the bacon; the blacksmith, seated in a large chair with tin pan and pewter spoon, was absorbed in the mystery of mixing flap-jacks. Miss Yancey flitted from one to the other of her assistants, administering such praise or criticism of their endeavors as she deemed advisable. The measured blows of an axe, at the wood-pile, indicated the nature of the barber's contribution to their mutual efforts.

It struck me, at once, that this frontier heart-breaker was a most practical young woman, in thus utilizing the conflicting attentions of her admirers for the common weal. I soon fell into a reverie, amidst the bustle around me, from which I was aroused by a slight preliminary cough:

"Ahem!"

I looked up. Miss Yancey was standing in the doorway of an adjoining room, and beckoning me to come to her. I did so at once. She drew me rather sharply into the neighboring apartment, and, closing the door, leaned against it.

"Now, we've got the boys fairly started," she remarked, "I reckon we can have a few minutes to ourselves. Are you fond of music?"

At these words, I cast my eyes about me, and was surprised to see that the room contained an open piano, on which were scattered sundry sheets of music. There were lace curtains in the windows, tastefully gathered with ribbon. A handsome Brussels carpet covered the floor. On the small centre-table stood a variegated bouquet of wild flowers.

Miss Yancey seated herself at the piano. I was greatly surprised at this evidence of her accomplishments.

"Do you play?" I exclaimed.

"Right smart!" she replied, with becoming modesty.

She ran her hands carelessly over the keys. I cannot say what Miss Yancey sang—I was not familiar with the ballad; but I was deeply impressed by the formality of her preliminaries. She gazed at me first intently, with a depth of feeling in her eyes that made my heart palpitate; then she permitted one hand to rest lightly and carelessly on mine, while she turned over the leaves of her music. I began to feel alarmed. When she finally began to confine herself to the piano, she declared melodiously that her heart was a sentimental "river that flowed to the sea"; but her manner compelled my belief that the direction of this passionate "river" was alarmingly personal; that she was a "twofold existence," but that her "soul" spent most of its time in my neighborhood; in fine, that all she "cared for or knew" was that she "worshipped me without wherefore." I was indescribably touched. But, through all the fascinations of this affecting ballad, thrilled the conviction that there were four able-bodied and jealous suitors in the adjoining room who might be disposed to resent this preference by force of arms. The situation was embarrassing. I was beginning to feel very uncomfortable, when for the first I realized that we were not alone—a groan, as sudden as it was agonizing, filled the apartment. Miss Yancey sprang up in some confusion. A strong odor of bergamot permeated the atmosphere—the barber was seated in an easy-chair, in an attitude of hopeless dejection.

The supper was not a cheerful one. Although Miss Yancey gave me the post of honor at her right hand, and poured the tea gayly, and presided generally with frontier grace, the dejection of the barber seemed to have infected the rest of the company. Several times, I caught the blacksmith and postmaster exchanging glances, and even the editor seemed to have enshrouded himself in an atmosphere of gloom. Nor did

the situation improve during the evening. In vain, Miss Yancey invited her amatory contingent into the sitting-room, and, with music and animated conversation, endeavored to raise the spirits of her guests. They disposed themselves in different quarters of the room, where they maintained a stony and critical silence; seeing which, the young lady lavished most of her attention upon myself.

It was growing late, when a humorous conviction began to dawn upon Miss Yancey. As yet, not one of her Chincapin admirers had evinced the slightest disposition to return home. During the last hour or two, these gentlemen had drawn closer together—forming, as it were, a hostile camp and indulging in suppressed but apparently unfavorable comment upon our gayety. It was evident that the entire party had decided to pass the night at the ranch.

Finding that one or two ill-concealed yawns had little or no effect upon the obvious purpose of her guests, this practical young lady brought matters to an issue with her usual directness: she arose; and, taking a lamp from the mantel-shelf, lighted it in a manner which showed unmistakably that she was about to retire, and, holding it in her hand, advanced to the centre of the room.

"'Pears to me, boys, none of you are reckonin' to get over to Chincapin to-night," she said; "and, there bein' so many of you, you'll hev to skirmish around natchally to find room. I'm goin' to give Mr. Brown the spare bed-room, and, when you've filled up the other ones, what's left over will hev to camp out or go in the barn. Ez for me, I've been up since sunrise this morning, and I'm going to bed."

Saying which, Miss Yancey indicated the various bed-rooms that gave upon the sitting-room and retired to her own apartment, in another quarter of the house. I did not trouble myself about the disposition of my companions; but, not finding the company particularly agreeable after her departure, I soon sought my room. Here, I made the customary brief night-toilet and threw myself upon the bed.

III.

BUT not to sleep. For a long time, I tossed about restlessly, like one in nervous dread of his surroundings. Although fatigued by the ride of the day, I found myself scarcely able to close my eyes. A strange presentiment of insecurity possessed me, accompanied by amusing reflections upon the demoralizing tendencies of Miss Yancey's charms, as evinced by the disaffected coterie in the adjoining room.

Apparently, the same wakefulness possessed these worthies. There was no movement among them that suggested the slightest intention of going to bed. From time to time, their voices in conversation filtered through the canvas partition-wall of my bed-room. The rattle of tin cups upon the centre-table and the occasional "gluck" of a bottle—evidently passed from hand to hand—betrayed the social character of their vigil. The tenor of their remarks was manifestly depressing; and, as each speaker delivered himself of his convictions, I could hear him punctuate his discourse with abundant exhortation upon the glowing grate. Not being particularly interested in their reflections, I was not giving special heed to them, when I was startled into sudden attention by the sound of my own name. I raised myself upon my elbow and listened.

"And this yer shrimp—this Brown, what do ye reckon is his game?" said a gruff voice—evidently the blacksmith's.

"Gone on Lil!" exclaimed the postmaster, in a tone of energetic conviction.

"Seen her out ridin', ye know, and, bein' struck by her style, he allowed to come up here and get the inside track of us fellers," was the jealous commentary of the barber.

"Ain't he bitin' off a leetle more than he can chew?" inquired the blacksmith again, in a tone of sarcastic disbelief.

"Wouldn't gamble on it!" rejoined the postmaster, suspiciously. "Ye seen how they kem up to the ranch—ridin' the same hoss—ez sociable and free ez ef they was on a picnic. 'Twouldn't ha' mattered to Lil ef we fellers hedn't been in a mile of the place."

There was an ominous silence, evidently devoted to jealous consideration of this statement. At last the blacksmith's voice broke the stillness.

"It's gittin' too thin, Lil's cottonin' to every blamed tramp and ringin' 'em in on us," he remarked, complainingly.

"An' it ain't the keereet thing—her takin' advantage of the old man and old woman's absence to do it," said the postmaster, piously overlooking the surreptitious character of their own visit.

"And, ef she does, air we the men thet air goin' to stand it?" rose the voice of the barber, tremulous with alcoholic excitement. "What air we settin' here quiet—like so many turkles on a log—a-watchin' of him fur? What's the matter with our jest natchally histin' him out o' this, and settin' him off on his travels?"

A hum of approval and the rattling of the tin

cups on the centre-table greeted this query, amid which the voice of the editor, hitherto withheld, made itself audible:

"Thar ain't but two things, boys," he said, gravely, "thet's altogether calculated to do the present subject justice. One of them is tar—and the other requisite is—feathers. This tender-foot hez come along here and camped on us, with the evident purpose of fascinating the prettiest and most attractive young woman in the Southern country. I don't take no stock in any fairy-tale about snake-bite, or anythin' happenin' to his hoss—that's all made up by him to give us fellers the go by. Natchally, it behooves us ez men, and ez friends of hern, to make an example of him to the community at large."

There was a shout of approbation from his hearers.

"Tar and feathers!" continued the editor's voice, steadily, "is the medicine thet I prescribe. An' now how's the job to be done? Thar's a chunk of the fust out thar in the wood-shed, and a brass kettle and a broom handy; but, allowin' thet you're all agreeable, where are we goin' to get the feathers?"

There were several suggestions, ill-considered and violent.

"Yes," said the voice. "Shavings is good, and broken corn-cobs is—perhaps—better, but we ain't got one, and it'd take too long to pervide the other; an', sich bein' the case, I allow thet sawdust is about our size. Thar's plenty of thet at the woodpile."

The abrupt closing of a door put an end to this unhallowed colloquy. Silence followed.

To say that I was alarmed by what I had just heard is to give but a feeble notion of my feelings. As I lay still a second, and pondered the utter helplessness of my position, a horrible nausea took possession of me that seemed to render me incapable of any movement. Struggling against this weakness, I sprang from the bed and hurried on the few articles of clothing I had laid aside, my teeth chattering, my knees smiting together in an agony of fear and excitement. For I was utterly without resource. About me stretched the bleak and boundless prairie. The village of Chincapin was ten miles away. I was unarmed. I had not even a pen-knife with which to defend myself against four able-bodied and desperate men, who had just declared their intention of subjecting me to the most inhuman indignity, if not of taking my life. And my horse—to which the frontiersman flies in all times of danger and extremity—was worse than useless, and separated from me by at least a mile of unknown country.

I was standing in the centre of my bed-room, half paralyzed by these reflections, when a sudden shaking of the window-sash attracted my attention. A new terror seized me. Hesitatingly, I groped my way to the window. In the pitchy darkness outside, I recognized some huge misshapen bulk and a cloaked figure that appeared to be beckoning to me. Half doubtfully, I raised the window. To my joy, it was Miss Yancey, enveloped in an old "slicker" of her father's and holding by the bridle the horse we had ridden together that afternoon.

"Hush!" she whispered. "You haven't got a moment to lose. The boys hev got jealous again, and hev laid off to brand you, and hev a tow-row generly. It's more than I can stand, and I reckon, when paw comes back—"

She had led the pony alongside the window as she spoke. I knew by the sound of his footfalls that his feet were muffled. As she stooped to take off the mufflers, I grasped the bridle she had abandoned and stepped from the window-sill into the waiting saddle.

With the grip of the good horse beneath me, my courage returned. In a transport of joy and gratitude, I turned to my fair deliverer.

"Don't stop for that," she said, abruptly; "you hev'n't time!"

She appeared to be tugging at something beneath her coat.

"And here! I reckon you hev'n't any!"

She pressed her six-shooter in my hand.

"You must make a break for it," she said, breathlessly. "Ride as if Old Nick were after you. Don't stop to think of me."

"But are you safe—provided they lose me?" I asked, in my perplexity.

"Sho! they won't harm me!" Miss Lilian returned, nothing daunted. "You know they're all bos of mine—I'll keep 'em in order. Don't forget to send me that breastpin!" she added, with a sudden feminine inspiration. "Now go, and don't shilly-shally any longer."

She disengaged the hand which I had held in

my hurried parting, and made a sudden impetuous movement as if to stampede the quiet Skeeter. Her haste was well-timed: as the pony bounded forward, the glare of a brandished torch fell full across the darkness, and I beheld the blacksmith and the postmaster just ahead of me, struggling with the contents of a heavy corn-basket.

The sudden apparition of my mounted presence for the moment disconcerted both, and, in that moment, I was upon them. A thin thicket of mesquite, through which I was moving, made it impossible to swerve aside. There was a sharp collision in the brush, the torch was extinguished, and, as I endeavored to force my way through the thorny chaparral, I realized in the sudden darkness that something was hanging to my pony's bridle. Rising in my stirrups, I used my revolver as a club, and brought it down with all my force.

The blow was given blindly, but fortune favored it. Hardly had it been delivered, when I felt the weight upon my bridle relax, and, with a crash and a bound, my horse had cleared the thicket, trampling under his feet some heavy body that fell beneath them. I was free again, and galloped rapidly away.

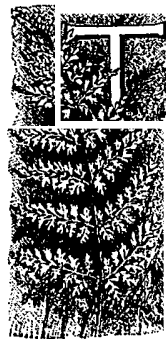
I did not check my horse's pace until I reached the town of Chincapin, where I left the exhausted Skeeter well-nigh foundered. Nor did I find it expedient to visit that never-to-be-forgotten locality. But, upon arriving at Fort Worth, I had a lengthy interview with the most fashionable jeweler, and, a few days later, purchased the only horse in town with an undeniable record. These pledges of my heartfelt gratitude I dispatched by messenger to Miss Yancey, and, ere long, received intelligence of their safe arrival. And I treasure, among the keepsakes which I do not show to everyone, a letter of thanks remarkable alike for its orthography and handwriting, in which I am informed that my pony, none the worse for his accident, awaits me whenever I see fit to brave again the dangers which environ this heartbreaker of Chincapin.

A KNIGHT OF THE GARTER.

BY OLIVIA LOVELL WILSON.

CONCLUDED FROM PAGE 53.

CHAPTER IV.



THE days that followed were full of anxiety and pleasure to Francis Ralston. His vacation must be a short one, and he felt that every moment was precious. Wexford was passionately fond of fishing, but a vigorous pursuit of this amusement did not preclude Miss Gillespie's society. The colonel was also an enthusiast in the sport, and Miss Gillespie so devoted to her father that the end of her little nose shone with sunburn from their many expeditions. Wexford and Ralston were the complement of their party, and Ralston's sensitive nature was undergoing quite as much agony as the worms on Miss Gillespie's hook.

That young lady was very perverse: one hour, all frankness; the next, veiling herself in an impenetrable atmosphere of distance which baffled and vexed every advance. At times, she would seem on the verge of communicating something that weighed heavily on her mind; and in such moments Ralston gazed at the diamond as it flashed, remembered Russell Wentworth, and quaked in spirit. The compact made in the first hour of their meeting served often to lend her manner a conscious confidence in his good-fellowship which rendered Ralston very happy.

Wexford paid a courtly attention to the girl, but carefully refrained from interfering with Ralston, and thus drew on himself many tirades from his sister in regard to his wasted opportunities.

Thus matters stood, one beautiful morning, when a grand fishing-party was planned by Mrs. Ballard, and a rendezvous appointed for La Rue Island, where all were to have dinner. The picnic was very general, but Ralston triumphed in having secured a small boat and Miss Gillespie's consent to share it for the day.

As they were about to start, a telegram was

handed Miss Gillespie. Amid all the clamor of merry voices about them, Ralston heard her exclaim in a tone of mingled pleasure and dismay. She handed the message to the colonel, who stood near.

"What shall I do?" she asked.

"Humph!" returned her father, after reading it. "I certainly should not forego the day's sport—unless you would rather do so. I will leave word for him to follow us to La Rue's, if you wish."

"Yes, that will do," she said, with decision, while her face flushed hotly.

"A little peremptory, eh, sis?" laughed the colonel, pinching her cheek. "Take good care of her, Ralston; bring her safe to dinner."

In a few moments, they were under way, distancing the small fleet of boats with their noisy burdens of humanity. For a while, Miss Gillespie sat silent and Ralston bent to the oars. Then he began to get the fishing-tackle ready, and she said, indolently:

"Do you really want to fish?"

"Only if you do," he replied. "I thought we came with that intention."

She laughed softly, saying:

"If we did, may we not change our minds?"

"To be sure!" he cried, eagerly.

"It seems like a sacrilege to profane this lovely morning by killing even fish," she said.

"You are in a relenting mood to-day," he smiled, in reply. "I never thought to see you becoming soft-hearted. You have seemed remorseless in your character of angler."

"Grant me the mood for once," she said, sighing. "The sun is like a benediction, the little breeze like a whisper from heaven, and I want to feel happy all day long. I think I will never be so happy again." She dropped her voice, almost with a sob.

Ralston was surprised and perplexed. This new mood silenced him. Finally he said:

"May I ask if the dispatch contained bad news?"

"No, no; it was nothing! But I am free to-day—utterly, irresponsibly free, and I must enjoy it! Mr. Ralston," speaking with sudden emphasis, "do you not think there is such a

thing as involuntary thralldom to individual influence?"

"That is a hard question to answer," said Ralston, quite astounded by this appeal.

"Oh, well," she added, speaking once more in that musing tone, "no matter! It is a foolish belief of mine that sometimes one is held by an influence almost distasteful, yet which one involuntarily obeys."

"You would have me believe, then," he said, with a searching glance into her downcast face, "that many a damsel of to-day is in need of a champion as of old, to deliver her from sore straits? Only it is an influence which must be combated. Permit me to say, it a much more subtle adversary than a knight with shield and buckler."

She colored deeply as she looked up and met his eyes.

"I was foolish to say such a thing," she said, trying to laugh. "Come, let us forget, this beautiful day, that there is anything sad or unpleasant in the world!"

"With all my heart. I only trust those clouds near the horizon will not bring us thunder-showers later."

"Oh, I hope not! I am foolishly afraid of thunder."

"I think it will amount to little, if anything. Only those clouds are what we call 'dunder-heads,' and usually mean a shower before many hours."

"I think you are as uncomfortable with your 'dunder-heads' as I was with my influences!" pouted Nina, prettily.

Ralston laughed, and the conversation drifted into another channel. They whiled away an hour or more as two young people can, until Miss Gillespie checked Ralston in a speech dangerously tender by discovering some lovely moss on one of the many little islands. He promptly proposed going ashore to procure the coveted treasure. Nina assented. Right merrily they anchored their boat and started on an exploring-expedition. They wandered about in a contented mood. Nina said it was a second Juan Fernandez, but Ralston dubbed it the Nineldorado and a few other impossible variations on her name. They found a shady nook after a time, and floated into a delightful strain of conversation, Nina for the first time rebuking Ralston for permitting her to make such a gross error in his name as familiarly to call him Mr. Francis! According to their measure of time, they only talked a moment, but "Sol" himself could alone vouch for its duration. They heeded not the ardent glances of the day-god, rendered more oppressive

by the ominous clouds gathering about him. Miss Gillespie finally bethought her of the rendezvous.

"I suppose we must go," sighed Ralston. "I wish we were on a desert island, away from all the world!"

"I do not," declared Miss Gillespie, rising hastily; "I am too hungry. It must be very late."

"I left my watch at home." And, in truth, Ralston was easily clad in a boating-garb both comfortable and becoming; but all jewelry was laid aside.

Miss Gillespie glanced anxiously at the sun and her own small watch. She shook it and put it to her ear.

"It has stopped," she said, in an annoyed tone.

"A failing in lady's-watches," smiled Ralston.

"No matter. We know we have loitered without conscience."

They sauntered down to where they had left the boat securely tied to a small sapling. They found they had strayed quite a distance from their landing-place.

"It is very hot," said Ralston, suddenly. "Wexford's hat is a trifle too large for me. We exchanged this morning, as his has a thicker crown. The sun makes my head ache intensely."

"It is certainly very warm," said Nina.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Ralston, in sudden consternation.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Didn't I leave the boat here?"

"Certainly."

"Well, it is gone."

"Gone?" The exclamation spoke volumes.

"Yes. I tied it securely—but it is gone!"

"It has drifted a little, perhaps," said Nina, anxiously.

"No; I can see a long way. It could not go without hands. Someone has taken it."

"Can we possibly be nearer our rendezvous than we think, and some of our party have towed it away to torment us?"

"Spoken wisely; but I fear we are more than a mile from La Rue. However, I will try shouting," and he sent a long cry through his hands. It echoed faintly, then all was silent, save the water lapping in the noonday sun.

"Oh, call again!" cried Miss Gillespie, eagerly: and once more Ralston sent forth a lusty shout, with the same result.

"This is very unfortunate, Miss Gillespie; but they will surely miss us at luncheon and send someone to find us. Our boat has been deliberately taken. Do not be frightened, however."

He spoke more to reassure her than because of any faith in their speedy rescue. They were stranded on one of many small islands, and, unless some of their own party had taken the boat, he could not imagine how long it might be before their sad plight was discovered.

"They will not know where to look for us," said Nina, biting her lip to keep back the tears. "I must get to La Rue—I left word I would be there. Oh, can you not do something?"

It was a trying situation for Ralston. Even the plunge into the bay was a slight ordeal compared to the sight of tears in those dear eyes.

"I will do all I can, be assured," he said, earnestly. "Do you stay here a moment, while I reconnoitre."

"No—I will go with you. I cannot bear to be left alone," she said, clinging to his arm.

So together they made the tour of the island again, but to no purpose. Finally, Miss Gillespie said wearily:

"Let us go back to the shade—we shall get sunstrokes here."

Silently, they took the path toward their former retreat. There was no way of telling the time, save by the sun; but it seemed about one o'clock. Ralston pulled Wexford's hat over his eyes and communed with himself; his thoughts were anxious and disconcerted.

"My head aches frightfully," he said, at length.

"Can I do anything for you?"

"No. I should not have told you," he replied, tossing aside his hat.

She bent toward him and laid a cool soft hand on his forehead—not with any lingering fondness, but as a physician might feel the pulse of a patient. Ralston said his head grew easier under the pressure; but once, as it passed over his eyes, he caught the small hand and kissed the fingers with sudden passion. She drew back, blushing hotly.

"I beg your pardon," he exclaimed, brusquely: "I could not help it."

She did not reply, but twisted the rings on her fingers, while Ralston cursed his own impetuosity in the silence that ensued. Of all times, to startle her by such a manifestation of his love!

"By Jove! I forgot one thing," he cried, suddenly; and the explanation seemed to restore a practical plane of understanding at once.

"What have you forgotten?" she asked.

"We must have a signal of some kind. Our party would look for us to make some sign of distress."

"But we have a shawl—nothing whatever," said Ralston, dolefully, pulling at his deep-blue neckerchief.

"I didn't bring my shawl," she rejoined, in a tone of equal discouragement.

These suggestions only served to rouse a new sense of helplessness. Hours seemed to pass. The sun, growing hotter every moment, plunged suddenly into the dark cloud beneath it. An ominous mutter of thunder was heard.

"Do you think it will rain?" she asked, her lips quivering.

"I trust not."

"I have thought of something for a signal," she suddenly exclaimed. "My overskirt will do—how stupid of me not to think of it before!"

"The very thing!" said Ralston. "I can easily manage to break down one of those saplings yonder." He dashed off and soon returned with a long slender sapling stripped of its leaves. With a merry laugh, Nina held out the pretty blue and white overskirt.

"Good!" he said, discreetly refraining from a glance at the graceful figure about which the boating-dress hung limply.

"We will pin this securely, to the sapling and raise it. Any pins, Miss Nina?"

"I have but one," she replied, making a rapid investigation.

"I must tie it, then," he said, and turned out his pocket in search of string. A toothpick, penknife, two dimes, a purse and a battered penny, were the result.

"Not very promising," Nina remarked, ruefully.

Just then, Ralston made a discovery in the inner breast-pocket of his coat. It was no time to hesitate—without venturing a glance at his companion, he drew out the band of red silk and elastic which he had so carefully treasured, and by means of it bound the end of the skirt about the sapling.

Miss Gillespie gave one look—a vivid blush crimsoned her cheeks; but she evinced no other sign of embarrassment or surprise.

Ralston proceeded to elevate the signal and she aided him. For a moment, their spirits rose with it; then a flash of lightning rent the heavens, and Nina, with a slight scream, clung to Ralston.

In a moment, his arms were about her.

"My darling, my poor little one," he cried. "nothing shall harm you. I love you. I would give up my life before anything should injure you."

"Oh, no! no! no!" she moaned, breaking away from him, and going step by step further,

while the thunder roared and rolled as if it would drown her words. "I have tried to tell you! Oh, believe me when I say I never wanted to deceive you! Oh! do not speak—"

"Nina, you cannot stop me now. Call it dishonorable, unkind, unmanly, to take advantage of this hour! I never meant to do so, but I have spoken from my heart—"

"No, no!" she cried, weeping and shivering with terror as another flash of lightning tore its passage through the clouds. "I have been—a wicked girl, but I thought it did not matter—you were engaged—"

"Whoever said that spoke falsely! I love no woman on earth besides your sweet self! Who told you this?"

"Mrs. Ballard. She said it was Kate Carey—"

"Good heavens! She is my cousin. If it were not for my promise to another friend, I would prove to you how false the assertion was. Is that all that stands between us? Oh, my darling—"

"No, no! I—"

"Speak, Nina! Tell me what you mean!" He caught her hands and held them as in a vise. She grew white and turned her face aside under his gaze. One of those ominous pauses that presage another outburst of heavy thunder hung over the earth.

"I am engaged to be married," she said, almost in a whisper.

"To whom? Tell me the truth now and all the truth."

"Mr. Wentworth. He was to come to the Bay to-day. I left word for him to meet us at La Rue Island. I can never forgive myself for—"

Ralston stood a moment longer, looking into her face as one looks on the dead. Then he threw her hands from him with passionate force.

"You do not love that man," he cried. "You are living a lie. False—false, to all alike. Crave forgiveness from higher power than mine, for, by heaven, I will never pardon you. You have ruined my life."

For a moment, they confronted each other, furious jealousy in his glance, fright and entreaty in her dark eyes. Then a flash of lightning appeared to encompass the girl, blinding Ralston's vision of her; a burst of thunder seemed to shake the very ground on which they stood; a wild scream burst from Nina's lips.

"Frank, Frank," she sobbed, and Ralston caught her as she fell forward almost unconscious, and held her close in his arms while the tempest burst upon them with blinding fury.

LUNCHEON had been merrily dispatched at La Rue Island, and several parties were preparing to launch their boats again, when the storm that had been muttering unheeded in the distance suddenly became a source of much solicitude. Moreover, certain of Mrs. Ballard's immediate party were feeling decided uneasiness. Mrs. Gillespie was fast working herself into a state of nervous excitement, which the colonel tried to quiet by appearing very calm. Two of the boats had failed to put in an appearance—that bearing Mrs. Ballard, Miss Grant, and Mr. Dimock, a young man in great request at the Bay, and the boat which had for its freight the precious burden of Colonel Gillespie's only child and Frank Ralston. Wexford tried to reassure the colonel, knowing Frank to be an excellent oarsman; but he felt anxious regarding his sister, for he had little confidence in Mr. Dimock, whom he considered a reckless youth.

Wexford, however, persuaded the colonel that it would be better to go back to the hotel, as the others might have been delayed, and, seeing the storm approach, have gone directly home instead of repairing to La Rue. Almost in tears, Mrs. Gillespie consented and they rowed back in haste and anxiety.

As they watched the thunder-clouds roll up, the colonel was torn by contending emotions. Added to his fears for his child's safety, he knew that he must encounter Russell Wentworth on reaching the hotel. If the colonel's conscience had not been guilty, he would not have dreamed of indulging in any dread or hesitation at the idea of facing a vexed lover. But the long-concealed antagonism in his heart toward the man of his daughter's choice had roused into fresh activity that morning, when he read the gentleman's peremptory dispatch. He had advised his daughter to open rebellion. Now he was forced mentally to admit that Mr. Wentworth would be justified if he should show indignation at his reception. Being a just man, the colonel acknowledged that the enemy held the advantageous position, and he was planning some strategic excuse which might shield Nina and exonerate himself from any meddling in the matter.

They landed on the pier just as the tempest burst, and rushed into the hotel, to find Mrs. Ballard and her party watching, while a tall youth came hastily forward to greet Colonel Gillespie.

Mrs. Ballard, in a state of tearful excitement, threw herself on Wexford, and, as he could learn nothing from her incoherent statement,

Mr. Dimock, in much confusion, endeavored to tell the story, of which this was the sum and substance:

When the barques separated, that morning, Mrs. Ballard had seen, as she supposed, Wexford and Miss Gillespie installed in the little boat for the day. The exchange of hats perplexed her near-sighted vision, and, as both her brother and Ralston were clad in dark-blue, it was an easy mistake to make.

Reaching the island on which the loitering couple had landed and recognizing the small boat, Mrs. Ballard had conceived the idea that it would be rare sport to tow it away and so give the pair a great fright. The design was carried out in high glee, and, towing the little shell, the trio went on fishing.

Presently, thinking it time to conclude the joke, they sought to return to the island, but, to their dismay, discovered they had lost their reckoning: they had unconsciously rowed a long distance and were among so many small islands that they could not find the one from which they had stolen the boat.

Mrs. Ballard only became more confused, as she realized the enormity of their conduct and knew what would be Wexford's displeasure thereat. They rowed back and forth, afraid to go to the place of rendezvous. Mr. Dimock then proposed that they should return to the Crossman House and find someone better acquainted with the bay to assist them. The storm, as it muttered in the distance, upheld this sensible proposition, and they hurried back to the hotel, arriving a few moments before Colonel Gillespie's party.

Mrs. Ballard's tremor was increased by the presence of Russell Wentworth, whom she knew by sight; and, when Wexford appeared, appreciating her egregious blunder, she flung herself on his mercy, feeling no desire to vindicate her conduct.

Wexford swore under his breath as he listened, and the roar of the tempest was mild in the ears of his poor sister, who knew how hard it was to rouse an angry spirit in his quiet kindly breast. He pushed her from him and strode over to the colonel. But the colonel and his companion had heard enough. Actuated by a similar impulse, the three men rushed to the door. Here the colonel paused and listened to a common-sense proposal from Wexford, to man a large boat and get someone who knew the bay to manage it; but Russell Wentworth never stopped until he reached the pier. They found him struggling to loosen one of the small barques. Amid the roar and lash of the storm, the colonel

cried to him that they would be forced to wait until the first fury had spent itself. The men were getting out the long-boat. The reply contained the information that they might wait—he should go alone.

"Don't be a fool, Wentworth," cried Wexford. "Why, Ralston—Frank Ralston—is with her! It is folly to go in that shell: you cannot find room for both—"

The wind took the words of expostulation from Wexford's lips and blew them away, together with Wentworth's answer, as he pulled out into the bay, his boat rocking like a leaf on the water.

"Donkey!" muttered the colonel, holding fast to his dripping hat. "I wish he might drown some of his infernal puppyism. I say, Wexford, are they getting out that boat?"

"Aye, aye! This way, sir!"

The storm, however, had spent its first fury, and, as with an angry man, the reaction came all the sooner for the violence of the outburst.

Twenty minutes after Mr. Wentworth's rash plunge into the tempest, it began to subside into a slow drizzle. The thunder still rolled threateningly; but the clouds broke away, until, when Wentworth first descried the signal of distress constructed by Ralston's ingenuity, the sun had begun to shine brightly.

The young man could hardly have defined his own feelings as he bent vigorously to the oars. His grievance regarding the coldness of his reception kept pace with the anxiety in his heart. His face settled itself into stern lines as he neared the island. He determined to take Nina back with him, at any rate; the rest of the party could follow in the large boat. He had not realized that Miss Gillespie and Mr. Ralston were alone the victims of Mrs. Ballard's practical joke. He had heeded little what was said, save that Nina was out in the storm. Judging from his face, her reckoning would not be a gentle one. His exactions had already made "the little rift within the lute."

Securing his boat, he walked toward the sapling, with its dripping signal. No animate object greeted his eyes. He was about to call, when a few steps brought him before a thick underbrush, and he paused a moment in sheer surprise and displeasure. Drenched with rain, her hat tossed aside, her hair in elf-locks about her pale face, stood Nina Gillespie. She had been weeping, and her voice still shook as she said:

"Wherever I am, wherever I go—I shall—never forget your nobleness. I can never cease to be grateful to you."

And Ralston replied, standing with folded arms a little distance from her:

"Nor can you take from me the memory of the last few moments, or teach me to think the future fair. Whatever your bonds have been, to-day should loosen them. We belong to each other. You may give yourself to him, if you choose—keep to the letter of a promise made in ignorance. But you know what such promises are worth."

"Do—not make me more—unhappy—"

"Nina—Miss Gillespie!" Mr. Wentworth's voice struck in curtlly, and the girl uttered a little cry as she confronted the gaze of her betrothed. She shivered and instinctively drew nearer Ralston, then, bravely recovering herself, went up to Mr. Wentworth.

"Ah, Russell, you have found us," she said, so wearily that he might have pitied the white tired face. But a man who feels his love outraged has little mercy left within him.

"I am here—yes—and have heard what it may or may not be your pleasure to explain," he replied, stiffly. "May I also inquire for the rest of your party?"

Nina looked bewildered, but Ralston said:

"Miss Gillespie was alone with me when our boat was taken. Very luckily, few have suffered the exposure to the storm."

"The affair has been most unfortunate in every respect," said Mr. Wentworth, with measured insolence. "Nina, if you are ready, we will return to your parents, at the hotel."

"Oh, yes!" she said, still in a weary exhausted tone. But Mr. Wentworth did not attempt to assist her, although her languid step was weighed down by the soaked condition of her clothing. Ralston offered her his arm, but she refused, only casting an appealing glance toward him. On reaching the boat, however, Ralston steadied it while she took her seat. As Wentworth was about to follow, he glanced indifferently over his shoulder toward Ralston, saying:

"The craft is hardly large enough for three, Mr. Ralston."

Nina rose at once.

"Russell, what did you say?" she demanded, with sudden life. "Do you propose to leave Mr. Ralston here? Then I shall stay also!"

"What folly is this?" he demanded, angrily. "Speak at once, Nina, and, if you are indebted to this gentleman in any way, I will see that the debt is amply paid."

"You have no right to speak in that tone," she responded, with spirit, checking Ralston's ready reply by a pleading glance.

"I have striven, God knows, to do what was

right. Mr. Ralston understands I meant no harm if I misled him. He has acted nobly! I cannot permit you to leave him here while I go back to the hotel."

"I beg of you to return, Miss Gillespie. My friends will soon come for me," Ralston said, in a low tone.

"Permit Miss Gillespie to say all she desires, Mr. Ralston," said Wentworth, haughtily. "An explanation is very satisfactory. Perhaps you will tell me how I come to owe such a debt of gratitude to Mr. Ralston?"

"Mr. Wentworth, this is not only unkind, but cruel," cried Ralston. "The poor girl is worn out! Have you no sense of—"

"Stop!" cried Nina, in a ringing tone. "I will tell him all—all, Frank—and let him judge between us. I have been a wicked girl—I misled Mr. Ralston. I acted a part because I thought he was acting one; my evil love of coquetry, my vanity, all led me on—"

"Nina—Miss Gillespie—I entreat you—I beg of you—" cried Ralston, imploringly.

"No, no—let me tell the whole now while I have courage. I deceived him, and I feel myself no longer worthy any good man's love. Knowing this and that he has striven to forgive me and aid me to bear the burden of my conduct by giving me still his kind friendship, I beg you to remember it, Russell, and treat him as a friend of mine should be treated."

"You forget, Nina, I have only one place in the boat. If you prefer that Mr. Ralston should row you to the hotel, choose between us. I will wait."

"You know this boat will take us all three," she replied, her eyes growing bright and hard as she met his glance; "you know you are adding to the grief I already feel regarding my conduct. Will you persist in refusing me?"

"Mr. Ralston will hardly accept an invitation now, and I—"

She made a sudden step forward in the boat; she snatched the diamond from her finger and held it toward him.

"Take it," she cried: "the odious sign of our engagement. I hate it! I will no longer be subjected to your whims and tempers—I will have courage for the whole truth. I tried to do right, to keep my promise; but you have shown me my own heart. I will stay with Mr. Ralston."

"Nina!" Ralston caught her in his arms as she sprang to his side.

"I wish you joy, Mr. Ralston!" said Russell Wentworth, with a sneer that illy concealed the dismay of his soul. "You have won the false heart of a coquette and may live to prove its

"word." And he pushed the little boat far out into the water and rowed as if for his life—little realizing, poor youth, that the very anger of his parting would prove the surest balm for his wounded spirit.

As for Ralston, he scarcely heard the taunt. He was bending over Nina, who, faint and white, leaned against him, and he was drinking the truth from her glance and feeling that a world of angry lovers could not move him from his rapturous peace.

"How can you trust me?" sobbed the girl. "I have been so wicked! He is right when he says I—"

"No matter, my darling—the world may stand still, so that you love me," he cried, kissing her cold hands. "Come, my poor love—we are little better off than ten minutes ago. But the sun is shining—the storm is over. It argues well for our future. Someone else will see our signal of distress, as did Mr. Wentworth. Ah, how very wet you are! I am afraid you will be ill, after this."

"No, no," she said, cheered by his comforting tone. "At any rate, we both run the same risk. Frank, Frank—I never meant to love you."

"But, like Paddy's sweetheart, you couldn't help yourself. There—do laugh a little and look more like yourself."

At this moment, a loud shout greeted them, and they somewhat hastily assumed less devoted attitudes, as the long-boat, bearing Wexford, the colonel, and two men, came across the water toward their island.

Nina sprang into her father's arms with a sob of relief, as Wexford grasped Ralston's hand, with many apologies for his sister's share in the affair.

"No matter, dear fellow—it is all right," said Ralston, joyously.

"We met Mr. Wentworth returning, and he directed us to the island," said the colonel, wrapping Nina in a shawl and drawing her head down on his shoulder. For reply, Nina lifted her left hand, bereft of the diamond, then thrust it out of sight, and hid her face against him. The good colonel chuckled with satisfaction. He had his darling again, though he little dreamed for how short a time.

"I say," exclaimed Wexford, as they were about to push off from the island: "do you want to leave the signal?"

"Oh, no!" cried Nina. "Leave my over-skirt, indeed!" Then she stopped suddenly, with a furious blush.

"I will get it," cried Ralston.

"Sit still, Frank. You look like a ghost, in

spite of your excitement. I will bring the thing." And Wexford darted off, to reclaim that portion of Miss Gillespie's wardrobe which had performed its office in the signal-service. Then they rowed swiftly back to the hotel.

Miss Gillespie was not ill after her adventure. She appeared in the parlors that evening with a languid step, it is true, and a trifling pallor, but looking very interesting withal. Mr. Ralston, however, had succumbed to a heavy chill and was confined to his room. Wexford attended him faithfully, and, in the restlessness of the fever that followed the chill, Ralston made a clean breast of the whole affair, including a recital of his first encounter with Nina Gillespie. And, despite his suffering, he robbed the story of his ducking, while pursuing the shoe, of none of its humorous effects. Wexford roared with laughter. Ralston had finished and was falling into a light doze when Wexford said:

"Asleep, Frank?"

"Just turning the corner."

"Do not get around yet. Look here! I found this on the signal; it belongs to Miss Gillespie, I presume—looks suspiciously like a gar—"

"Exactly," interposed Ralston, opening one eye; "it was the only string we could find! I forgot to tell you I had saved it, and—and it happened to be still in my pocket."

"Humph!" chuckled Wexford, rolling the garter into a small ball. "Frank!"

"W-e-l-l?" drowsed Ralston, sleepily.

"What do you call yourself, after all? Rescuing damsels and recovering their wardrobes—and all this kind of thing? A nineteenth-century knight of—"

"Knight of the Garter, Wexy. 'Honi soit'—you know the rest," and Ralston was in the land of dreams before Wexford's laugh of appreciation died away.

When Mrs. Ballard encountered her brother the next morning, the very first glance at his face showed her that she had nothing more to dread from his displeasure. This was a great relief to her mind, as this petted brother was the one person of whom she stood somewhat in awe. In spite of the fact that he gave way to her in many things, she knew there was a limit beyond which it was not safe to push his forbearance.

Yet, with the usual inconsistency of human nature, the moment she found herself relieved from the fear of his anger, she prepared to renew her reproaches for his wilful neglect during the past weeks of possible advantages. She had thoroughly set her heart on having pretty Nina for a sister-in-law, and the thought

that Ralston would carry off the prize was gall and wormwood to her soul.

"Carrie," said Wexford, before she could begin her attack, "I need hardly tell you Frank is engaged to Miss Gillespie."

"Well, it is scarcely necessary. They are absurdly devoted. It was shameful, the way she treated Russell Wentworth, and——"

"I think I may as well tell you, also, that I am to marry Miss Kate Carey in October."

"John Roger Wexford! How could you let me make such a fool of myself? I will never——"

But Wexford had fled precipitately and she was addressing the furniture and two large mirrors.

Mr. Francis Ralston and Miss Gillespie were married in the following January. Among Mrs. Ralston's wedding-presents was a dainty plush case containing a pair of silk garters. The clasps were wrought silver, inlaid with gold, one bearing an owl with jeweled eyes, representing night, the other a jewel-eyed dove, representing

morning. On a card hidden under the clasps were found the following words: "To Mrs. Francis Ralston, from her friends Mr. and Mrs. John R. Wexford," and folded in a paper in the box were the following lines:

TO FRANCIS RALSTON.

"Honi soit qui mal y pense,"

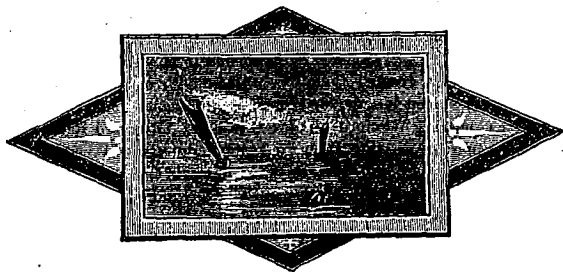
Thus frowning down unseemly glee,
King Edward, with suave nonchalance,
Bound the garter on his knee.

If honored thus by ancient king,
May we not in earnest part
Commend them to the loving queen
That sways the empire of your heart?

Since Herrick sings of Julia's eyes,
Sir John his lady's mouse-like feet,
Shakespeare's hero be the glove
To touch the cheek of Juliet sweet—

May we not sing: "Oh, would that we
May in these clasps our love ensconce,"
And thus the caroling world defy,
With "Honi soit qui mal y pense,"

KATE AND JOHN.



ALONG THE BAYOU.

BY MISS ALICE BOWMAN, AUTHOR OF "CREOLE BLOSSOMS," ETC.

CONCLUDED FROM PAGE 270.

CHAPTER XV.

Four days—five—and she did not come. Twice, meeting the professor alone, Bornito had ventured inquiry: "Mademoiselle—was she well?"

"Quite. But Mary had been fatigued somewhat by the last trip—these May mornings grow warm."

The six weeks of their stay in the Southland had passed, and now Professor Gaillard spoke of speedy return to his Northern home, and finally arranged for his last swamp-journey.

Very often, during these May trips, he talked of Bornito's summer application to English study, of the coming autumn, and of winter observation among swamp birds and reptiles. Bornito gladly entered into all plans, with hope lighting heart and eyes. Hope for what, he hardly knew, save that again the lovely one would brighten his life with her presence.

Sometimes, the memory of that conversation over Vanderlich's debts, the memory of De Villenaret's love, and of the shadow he had marked on the sweet face, brought a terror, a sickening fear, into Bornito's heart. That brow, pure and strong—it would wear the martyr's crown, and wear it nobly. Let the pure eyes see duty, and from duty neither heart nor hand would turn. Could Mrs. Vanderlich persuade her niece that duty demanded the sacrifice of her heart?

Bornito grew restless. Six days he waited—six days. He could no longer wait—he must see her—he must see them together. Well, and suppose—suppose the worst—what then? Ah, at least, suspense would be ended—at least, he would not be in darkness; and perhaps—perhaps he might venture—he, even Bornito—to warn, to lift his voice, and to show to her the wrong. She had said that he was true—she knew that he was true; and, to the voice of truth, perhaps— Ah, it was all perhaps, a dim misty perhaps, in Bornito's mind.

The seventh day, at noon, he left his home, traveled through the swamp, and, about the eighth hour, stepped forth from its darkness. Moonlight bathed the far-stretching canefields, the rough negro-cabins, and the gaunt angles of the sugar-house, and gave added beauty to

the De Villenaret mansion and its fair surrounding. Bornito again passed over yellow-tinted lowland, again threaded the tangle of deep draining-ditches. Yet, afar off, he could see lights twinkling amid those dark trees encircling the great house, and could hear music drifting down and mingling with the rustle of the cane, waving now in the two-foot height of its May growth.

He crept nearer, and looked within. The old saloon shone like an illumined vision, to the eyes of Bornito. A mellow radiance touched the white Venus on which he had gazed with wonder, touched that haunting face smiling from its golden frame, touched into wondrous reflection the old mirror where he had seen his own rough grand figure looking forth with lustrous eyes—touched, too, with exquisite softness, the white-robed form of Mary Gaillard.

How far away she seemed, sitting there by the long window, looking forth into the moonlit beauty of the night, the soft white lace and drapery of her robe surrounding her like a cloud of mist, Bornito thought. His heart swelled with tenderness and sadness. So far away she seemed, and yet so near. For did he not hold her in his heart with reverence, with joy unspeakable? She might try; but she should not ever break away from the shrine in which he had placed her—the holy of holies in his heart's temple.

There were many others present. At a distant table, sat the professor, looking over some large books of engravings; near by, Mrs. Vanderlich, with a sadly-wearied expression of countenance, kept her white hands busily working amid a mass of brightly-colored worsted; and all the other members of that first bayou-party Bornito recognized. There were, moreover, several strangers; one, a tall dark gentleman, sat by Miss Gaillard. The company was all silent, listening to the voice of Mademoiselle Rita. As soon as the gay song was finished, she dashed into a brilliant aria, and, lifting her bright face, talked to the son of her guardian, standing near, while her fingers fairly danced over the keys.

The swampman, his sight trained to great keenness, marked the actors in this life-drama.

He could see Mrs. Vanderlich glancing covertly toward Miss Gaillard and the dark gentleman, who talked earnestly, notwithstanding the indifferent manner of his listener; he could see Gerton, restlessly passing from group to group, lingering often near his cousin; he could see De Villenaret, sitting beside a strange lady, opening and closing her fan, a heavy frown contracting his forehead till the brows met above the black eyes.

After awhile, Mademoiselle Rita glanced toward the window where Miss Gaillard sat, and the tall gentleman, apparently obeying a call, hastened to the piano, and stood turning over some pieces of music.

Then indeed Bornito's heart throbbed; for Mary Gaillard, rising, stepped quietly forth through the long window into the shadows and moonlight of the verandah. Graceful, fair, and pure she stood, only five yards away—five little yards—one hand resting against the broad pillar, the other hanging quietly among the soft folds of her robe. The soft rays fell over her white figure, fell over her golden head and the face uplifted to heaven. Bornito also looked above: the sky was so blue. It was, he thought, like a dream of the lake, when calm sunlight rested upon the still water. He wondered whether he might dare approach and ask if she would not come yet once more to the old swamp.

Even as he hesitated, the window near darkened, and Vanderlich, hurrying forth, stood by his cousin. Instantly, the fair face fell, the golden head turned. Vanderlich spoke rapidly—what he said, Bornito could not hear; but the swampman could see that his gestures betokened excitement, and that Mary Gaillard did not listen unmoved. She was yet standing before him, when several of the company came into the verandah—the gentlemen with hats, the ladies with light wraps. "Walk" and "river," Bornito could hear. De Villenaret, approaching Miss Gaillard, threw a white lacy-looking fabric about her shoulders. So, they were all going. Yes; the professor even had laid aside his engravings, and Mrs. Vanderlich her worsted.

By twos and threes and fours, they passed down the avenue, their voices floating faintly back upon the evening-wind. Only De Villenaret lingered, closing slowly several of the long shutters, and Mary Gaillard stood waiting in the moonlight—a very serious expression, Bornito could see, shading the fair face.

They also, probably, would follow the others; and, thus thinking, the young man crept deftly amid the shrubbery, keeping near the avenue. When he had gone about half-way, he paused,

determining to wait till the loiterers had passed; for the ground here was secluded—a cove of greenery, shut in on three sides by hedges of cherokee and by bushes of viburnum. A huge oak arose within this space, and, under it, stood a garden-seat and a rustic table filled with some low pots of blossoming plants.

He peered forth from the viburnum-clump where he stood, and looked up the avenue. Very slowly the two he watched came through the moonlight and the shadows. His mind went back to that first day, when he had seen the little pleasure-craft slip through the shadows and sunlight of the bayou. As they approached, he could hear De Villenaret say:

"You see, I followed your suggestion, mademoiselle. I had the table covered with flowers. Reward me now: come see how lovely they look and how finely they bloom."

"Yes," answered Miss Gaillard; and Bornito remarked that she did not seem to avoid the delay, though the rest of the party was now quite far off. "I noticed them this morning."

"But not with me," persisted De Villenaret. "Come: let me enjoy the pleasure of seeing you enjoy them."

"The shadow of the oak makes this a lovely spot for shade-plants," Bornito could hear her say calmly, as she passed over the greensward; and he noted, with keen pain, the ungloved hand resting within her companion's arm.

"Yes," answered De Villenaret. "Let us sit down a moment—only one moment. The others are yet in sight; we shall soon reach them, and I never see you alone. Give me this pleasure. You will soon be going home, and then—"

Bornito could not distinctly hear what followed; but he saw that Mary Gaillard granted the request and sat down on the bench—looking, ah, so ethereal, so lovely.

A deep sharp pain darted, like the thrust of a knife, through his young heart. A mad impulse seized him—an impulse to rush forward and snatch her away from the presence of the man who would gladly receive her as payment for Vanderlich's debt. He had, indeed, taken one headlong step, but drew back, remembering they would think him crazed: and she—she might be angered, as when he had offered his gold.

Poor Bornito! He stood gazing forth, wild-eyed and white. She was talking earnestly, one snowy arm resting among the blossoms, which she seemed intently regarding, as her hand toyed with their dainty leaves; and De Villenaret, bending forward, listened gravely, his black

eyes drinking in, with unconcealed admiration, the grace of her beauty. When she was silent, and yet, all downcast and troubled and shy, sat as one waiting, De Villenaret answered some words hastily, and, seizing the hand which yet wandered among the flowers, bending his head, kissed it tenderly.

CHAPTER XVI.

AND now a strange swimming filled Bornito's head, a terrible blackness came over his eyes, and, as one utterly bereft of reason, he would have stridden forth and snatched her away and stricken down De Villenaret: for was he not almost a savage, this great strong swampman, with his tender heart? But, even as his muscles thrilled, ready for motion, a hand laid on his shoulder and a short laugh not altogether unfamiliar recalled his senses. He looked around, wrath in his face. The halting stranger, whom he had seen on the bayou-bank, stood before him.

"Good-evening, mon ami," he said, in a low voice. "How! you don't remember me? Did you deliver the message I sent Monsieur de Villenaret? Ah, your mind clears now. But you don't seem particularly happy, my friend. That sight yonder makes the devil in your heart. Eh! I have stood here watching your face. It was as good as a play. Well, life is tragedy or farce—as one makes it. Mine has been a little of both."

He rattled all this off lightly; then, suddenly becoming grave, asked seriously:

"Have you sense enough, Leon Bornito, to remember a name and a request which I wish to give you, and which refer to your father?"

"To my father?" cried Bornito, fairly startled into life. "Who are you?" And he looked eagerly into the thin yellow face before him.

"You asked me that question once before, friend. Perhaps I may tell you, some day—perhaps I may not. As it is, who you are, I know full well—Leon Bornito, fisherman and swampman, who has not been over-happy, though he has been in heaven since the day that demoiselle yonder with the blue eyes came floating up the bayou."

Bornito clenched his fist and turned threateningly

"Open your hand, mon ami. I was there, that day. Proof—you want it? Bien! I saw the gold spread on the bayou-bank. Now you believe? Yes? Que diable! I had been three days dodging about in the woods yonder. I found a treasure—yes." Here, the stranger laughed. "I had not expected to find such a treasure. You look puzzled."

"What is it you have to tell me of my father?" asked Bornito, interrupting. "Is he living?"

"Living? No; I regret to say that he is dead. You don't look triste, mon ami."

"I never knew him," replied Bornito. "I wish," he added, impatiently, "I wish you would hasten and tell me what you have to tell me."

"So, you grow restless. Bien! the name I have to give you is Père Drouard, and the request that, if he come to you some day, you will give heed to what he says."

"And is that all?" asked Bornito. "I thought there was news of Paul Crezoni, my father."

The other laughed again—this time, almost boisterously—so that the fisherman looked again angered.

"Ah, bah!" he at last cried, "this life is, after all, a farce. Tenez—if Père Drouard come to you, then news will come of your father; if not—well, you must rest content to know that he is in his grave. They are a pretty couple yonder."

"Hold!" exclaimed Bornito. "Tell me: why do I not hear my father's name? Why?"

"Not a question will I answer," replied the other, looking into the young man's face with a firm hard expression; "not one. But see—this I will do for you," here the black eyes again sparkled with malice: "I will but walk before that tree yonder, and, I promise you, Monsieur de Villenaret will follow, and leave that demoiselle with the blue eyes; then you may talk to her, and sing the songs you sing on the bayou. En passant, too, make the demoiselle my regret for the fright I gave, the night she rested in Dominique's hut; also, to the demoiselle Barbara, my thanks for the pretty relation of her life and of your life, whereby much knowledge was given me. And hold—a parting word: Look out for Dominique; look out for this Monsieur de Villenaret: wear a coat of mail, if you have one. I would not that anything happen to you. And, before we part, let me say to you—though for what, you may never know—merci, mille fois, merci."

He doffed his cap, as he spoke, and, yet laughing, stepped forward and passed toward the tree. Here he paused an instant, just long enough to let De Villenaret see his figure, then walked haltingly across the open sward, and disappeared behind the hedge on the further side, and so up the avenue.

De Villenaret, from whose grasp Miss Gaillard had long since withdrawn her hand, sprang up suddenly, spoke a few hasty words to his companion, then dashed over the moonlit space, and rapidly followed in the footsteps of the stranger.

Bornito, quite dazed, stood watching.

Miss Gaillard, finding herself alone, leaned her cheek on her hand, and sat as if in deep thought. The reverie evidently was sad; for a look of deep melancholy settled over the lovely face till it grew so plaintive in its expression that, unconsciously, Bornito drew several steps nearer, longing to lift the pain from her heart. Those who had gone before were singing, and the distant music and the wind sighing and the cry of the night-insects all mellowed themselves into a chorus of infinite tenderness; while the long moss draping the old oak, and the boughs themselves, were swaying about with a sound like a human sigh.

Perhaps he might, indeed, for one instant, have stood before her and spoken a gentle greeting; perhaps she might have lifted her face, and thrown him, through the moonlight, a soft smile; but, at that moment, Gerton Vanderlich broke rudely from the hedge beyond.

"Where is De Villenaret? Why are you alone, Mary?" he cried, excitedly. For Bornito, having drawn close, could hear now.

She looked up, startled.

"Do not be disturbed, Gerton," she answered, sadly, "I have temporized—temporized, Gerton, for your sake," she added, bitterly. "I have asked for a little more time, and Monsieur de Villenaret has only gone a step yonder, to look after some tramp who passed. Almost," she continued, with a pitiful little gesture of disdain, "almost, you have made me despise myself."

Vanderlich came nearer, and sat down.

His voice was low, but Bornito was standing now just back of Miss Gaillard. He did not scruple to listen. His wild breeding had taught him, above all else, this: to defend the helpless—the innocent—and there was that in the eyes lifted to Vanderlich's which recalled the helpless terror he had once seen in a bird, snake-charmed, on the bayou-bank near his home.

"Temporized? What have you promised? Is it to be death or life for me?" asked Vanderlich.

"Hush, Gerton, hush—such silly words are out of place."

"Out of place?" he exclaimed, passionately. "I tell you, Mary, rather than endure the shame of confession to my uncle—and rather than live dishonored, owing this debt—a thousand times, I would take my life. You do not believe me? See, then. De Villenaret told me that, this night, you would decide. Mary, the stream yonder flows deep. What is your decision? Quick—life or death?"

He had suddenly started up, and now, standing before her, seized both the little hands, hold-

ing them as in a grasp of iron, and forcing her to look into his wan haggard face. She grew deathly pale, and her lips parted in a faint cry of pain.

With the fleetness of a deer, Bornito darted forward: with the bound of a tiger, sprang on Vanderlich. The latter, utterly unprepared, released his cousin, staggered backward, and fell on the seat at her side. Bornito stood like an avenger before them, his eyes blazing, his chest heaving, his whole figure grandly eloquent with indignant scorn.

"Coward!" he cried, folding his arms and looking down on Vanderlich. "Coward!" he repeated, with yet deeper scorn. "Do not be afraid, mademoiselle," and he gazed at Mary Gaillard, leaning like a broken flower over the table, "do not be afraid. 'Ee weel not dhrown 'cense'f, non."

Meantime, Vanderlich, who had been silent from sheer surprise, now jumping up, doubled his fists and came toward Bornito.

"You wan' fight, yaisse," said the swampman, looking with contempt at his opponent, and seeming to grow, as he looked, even more powerful. "I ham rheddy, yaisse, me."

"Be still, Gerton," said Miss Gaillard, recovering voice and self-possession. "Monsieur de Villenaret will be here directly, and what then can you say? And you, Monsieur Bornito, go, I pray you, and—and remember," she hesitated here, a faint flush touching her pale cheeks, "remember your promise! If you do not go," she added, seeing he yet covertly eyed Vanderlich, "Monsieur de Villenaret will ask explanation, and—" She did not finish the sentence.

As she stood there—frail, anxious, with that faint flush on her cheek, and her lips yet trembling—all the worship of Bornito's heart burst forth. He suddenly snatched the little hand lying among the flowers, held it in his own, and, looking with his tender eyes into her now downcast face, cried passionately:

"You weel not marrie 'eem—non, non—you do not leave 'eem."

Vanderlich was dumb from sheer amazement, and Mary Gaillard—flushed, shy, and drooping—stood equally silent.

"An' you weel come once more to my 'ome—once more to dat swamp w'ere you 'ave med fo' me paradise. Leeft but your eyes, and say to me: 'I weel come.'"

Her lips moved, but there was no sound—only one instant, she did indeed lift those lovely eyes, and Bornito caught in their depths an answer to his words—caught, too, an answer to his heart. He quickly raised the hand

he held, pressed it reverently to his lips, and, before Vanderlich or Miss Gaillard had recovered from their surprise, he was gone.

And now, to Bornito, all the world was fair, and the darkest swamp-tangle lighted by the memory of that touch.

The gray dawn was beginning as he stepped forth from the denser gloom, on to the rush-bank of the bayou; but a tint of the dead moonlight seemed shading his yellow-gray home, and he did not find it strange, even, that Dominique sat, like a spirit of evil, crouching against the willow-trunk. Bright as the young day, with a fervid glow in his eyes, Bornito greeted the old man.

"Eh, Dominique, stay and breakfast with me. I have strange news to tell thee of one who knew my father—Paul Crezoni."

But Dominique would not eat—only he sat and listened, while Bornito, with the bright light yet in his young eyes, told of the stranger's greeting—told of the message he had left for De Villenaret, almost five weeks before—told of his queer words and the sudden following of De Villenaret.

The old man, as he listened, grew more bent, more yellow.

"He said to thee this, and no more?"

"No more," replied Bornito.

Dominique pondered.

At last, he lifted his head and looked searchingly, even lovingly, into the young man's face.

"Leon, my son, hast thou thought of what I said to thee about Barbara?"

Bornito answered by a look of surprise.

"See then, Leon, my son, thy grandfather and thy mother, they both willed that thou shouldst have my pretty Barbara as wife. Thy mother took from me Antonio, and she gave me thee for my Barbara, my little one. I grow old, Leon. Let me see Barbara thy wife. There is need for haste. I would not leave my girl alone. I would see her safe in thy care."

He ceased, but still sat looking anxiously into the young man's face. He could find there only surprise and pain. After a little waiting, Bornito said firmly:

"Thy Barbara is fair, and of tender heart, and good: but hast thou forgotten, Dominique, there is that within me which calls me forth into the world?"

Dominique sighed.

"'Tis even as I feared. Thou art like thy mother. Thou wouldst away to foreign lands, and thou wouldst follow the evil blue eyes of that demoiselle from the North."

The young man did not answer.

"I have watched," continued Dominique, "I have heard thee singing thy love-songs—thou darest not deny."

"Deny?" exclaimed Bornito, starting up and standing before the old man, his eyes glowing, his figure drawn to its full height. "See then, Dominique, she is to me fairer than the loveliest flower, and she knows, for I have told, Dominique, I give to her the worship of my heart."

The old man rose, and, stretching out his hands with a singular gesture, exclaimed:

"The words thou hast spoken, and that which I see in thine eyes, give me strength."

He stepped into his boat, and, without another word, pulled quickly away.

Bornito, in the growing brightness of the new day, stood looking after the boat till it had quite disappeared. He sighed, noting the old man's car-strokes, singularly feeble and uncertain in their dip; but, his glance falling on a blue iris-blossom, there came back a memory of that magic touch, a smile stole over his lips, and, creeping upward, left its tender light within his radiant eyes.

CHAPTER XVII.

"To-morrow," thought Bornito, "to-morrow, it will be the third day since I have seen her, and to-morrow the professor pays his last visit. Will she now come? Or is she angered? And how can I, Bornito, lift my eyes to her face?"

For, with the memory of his rash act, a great shyness came over the young man, mingling with the feverish unrest in his heart.

It was a fair evening. A sky of clear ivory tint stretched over the bayou. The swamp was brodered with richly-colored flowers, humming-birds darted hither and thither, lilies floated on the dark water, while the birds sang and the leaves rustled and the long moss waved. Bisqua, basking in a patch of sunlight, floundered gently among the rushes.

Under the willow, on a rough bench, sat Bornito—a big book on his knees. Yet he had not been reading—rather, he had been studying the life-volume opened before him these past four weeks, here in the silence and calmness of his bayou-home, striving to unravel the mystery of this great book, even as he had striven in the long ago to spell out the hard words and dive into the hidden meaning of his first reading. Much he had thought of that halting stranger; much of his missing altar-treasures; much of Dominique and of Barbara.

Dominique he had not seen since that morning when the old man rowed himself away with those weak wandering strokes. Twice he had

drawn up his pirogue beside the narrow board, raised like a bridge, leading from the bayou's bank to the hut-steps, and twice Barbara, meeting him, said: "Grandfather is away, Leon. He is off in his boat; he is not well, I think. May the dear Virgin guard him."

Pondering all this—feeling almost guilty, as he thought of that last meeting—the young Bornito, hearing oar-strokes, looked up expectant. Surely now the old fisherman came. Few others rowed thus far into the swamp-depth.

He listened. Nearer, nearer drew those strong even oar-dips. They were not the strokes of Dominique; and, while yet some two bank-curves away, he could see that the boat was not Dominique's. A sailor, a Frenchman, with whom he had sometimes talked on the wharves two miles below the white shell-banks of the bayou, rowed this coming craft, and beyond the sailor sat a priest, who looked from bank to bank as one searching and all unused to the wilderness around. The rower, seeing the palmetto hut, bent more earnestly to his oars, and, turning the bow, ran straight on the bank and among the roots of the willow.

A great rushing filled Bornito's ears, and the glow of surprise stained his forehead, so that he could scarce answer the sailor's greeting; for all the trees and the wind and the cane seemed whispering the name that halting stranger had given: "Père Drouard—Père Drouard."

Meanwhile, the sailor, steadying the boat against the current of the bayou, nodding toward the young swampman, said:

"This is he, my father—the man you seek."

The priest got up and stepped ashore, carefully guarding a package held with both hands.

"God's peace be with thee, my son."

"Thanks, father," answered Bornito, rising and standing, though the earth seemed to rock under his feet.

"I have much to say to thee, my son; but first tell me, if this sailor leaves me here, canst thou take me in thy boat to the wharf whence I came?"

"Surely," answered Bornito, still hearing the great rushing in his brain, and feeling the earth yet rock under his feet.

"It is well—thou mayest return," said the priest, addressing the sailor.

"And thou wilt not forget, my father, to say a prayer for me to Notre Dame de bon Secours?"

"I will not forget."

He stood a moment, watching till the boat was quite out of sight and there was only a faint sound of dipping oars, then he turned and regarded the young man earnestly.

"I have much to say to thee, Leon Bornito," he repeated, "and I would not be interrupted nor overheard."

"There is none to listen," answered Bornito. "Here you may speak without fear, my father."

"Do you guess who I am?" asked the priest.

"Père Drouard, and you come from a halting stranger—a man who knew my father."

"Yes," said the priest, crossing himself; "let us hope that Christ will have mercy on his soul. He is dead."

"Dead?" exclaimed Bornito.

"Dead," repeated Père Drouard, taking off his hat and letting himself fall on the low bench, as if wearied.

His eye swept over the wild scene; he sighed, and then, turning, motioned the young man to a seat beside him.

"Yes, dead—found last night on the steps of my home, stabbed through the lungs from behind. I heard the fall, and hurried forth. He whispered but two words, and then expired."

"Dieu! And those two words?"

"The vendetta! Fortunately, he left with me papers containing matters of importance. Also, he left me these," here the priest touched the package, which he had placed on the bench between them; "these—certain sacred articles, taken from thine altar."

"He? He?" cried Bornito. "And what—"

"Wait, my son," interposed the priest. "Thou must listen calmly. It grows late, and the story is long. According to the papers left, they were stolen one eve, while thou wast rowing, following strangers who had been fishing about thy hut."

"My mother's urn for the holy water, and the scapular taken from her neck—the bit of holy cross," exclaimed Bornito.

"Yes," said Père Drouard, unwrapping the package and holding aloft, in his slender fingers, the delicate urn, "yes, and here they are. I restore them to the rightful owner. By this time to-morrow, these treasures would have been in possession of one Jean de Villenaret, for there was found on the dead man's person five hundred dollars and a paper stating that a check for five thousand more would be given as soon as these articles should be handed over to this Jean de Villenaret. Judging from the letters found, the stranger evidently had much difficulty making terms with this Monsieur de Villenaret. He gives a rather humorous account of a meeting with De Villenaret, wherein he tells him that he has not yet secured a paper—a copy of a certificate of marriage—and tells how De Villenaret takes upon himself the search; how he

twice caught him wandering about thy hut, and seeking information in a certain old chest."

Bornito uttered an exclamation of surprise.

The priest continued:

"He evidently feared foul play after parting with these valuables, unless he yet held a threat which he might at any time use against De Villenaret, and I think it was for this reason, also, he gave thee my name. Assuredly, he did not, after all these precautions, expect death.

"He was a gay merry fellow. He came to me with a dole for our new church, and begged I would, in return, hold this package and these papers"—here the priest tapped the breast of his gown—"the papers to be kept for five years, sacred, as under seal of confession, then to be destroyed, unless I, meantime, should learn of his death by foul play, when I was to examine and act as I thought best."

"But I do not understand," said Bornito, moving impatiently.

"And thou wilt not understand till I have told thee all, my son. Know, then, that thy mother did not marry Paul Crezoni—he was not thy father."

"Did not marry Paul Crezoni?" cried Bornito. "Who, then, is my father?"

"As he who is dead wrote the story, it is long; but I will tell it thee in my own words," answered Père Drouard.

"There was a gay young planter, who, in the long ago, came from his fields to hunt in this swamp. His name was Jean de Villenaret—uncle of the man thou knowest. One day, on these bayou-banks, he saw thy mother, loved her, wooed her in secret, choosing those hours when thy grandfather was away, and, with the assistance of Paul Crezoni, to whom he paid a good bribe, carried her off, married her, and went to France."

Bornito uttered a cry, and sprang from his seat.

"Sit down, my son," said the priest, "sit down and listen quietly. She—thy mother—was false to her word. She was plighted to Antonio Saturni, and she dared not tell her father of this young planter's love, for thy grandfather, so the papers relate, was a man of high temper, and a friend of Saturni's father, and a man of stern honor, who looked on the breaking of a plighted word as the breaking of an oath. Also, married, she dared not stay in this land. Dost know what she feared, my son? Revenge—the vendetta for her husband, the young planter whom she loved.

"See, then—the Saturnis are of Italy. Three generations they have lived here—is it not so?"

"Four," answered Bornito, who had reread himself, and now listened with forced calmness.

"Four, then," repented the priest, "and yet have not learned to leave vengeance in the hands of God, but retain the evil custom of their old home. Well, for these reasons—and because, also, Jean de Villenaret, not caring for the vendetta, at which he laughed, but, a proud man, well pleased to hide the humble birth of thy mother—for these reasons, thy mother's flight and marriage were thus arranged. Paul Crezoni—his tastes led him to wander over the world—for a good sum, left with them. Thus, the people here might be puzzled—might suppose thy mother had gone with him—he did not care. They would never find him—the wanderer—and they would never seek Monsieur de Villenaret, not knowing him guilty.

"And thus indeed it happened. Even thy grandfather was deceived till that letter came, two years later, calling him to his daughter in the city beyond.

"See, then, my son, punishment had come for the deceit of thy mother. Much of De Villenaret's boyhood had been passed in France, his youth in this country, but at a college North—so that, on his plantation, he was not missed, and, after his return to France, friends flocked around him, offering good wishes to the beautiful American wife, who spoke French with an odd soft accent.

"The young couple lived in Paris; but thy mother, who must have been beautiful, who had loved the solitude of the swamp and the beauty of nature, pined for the old home, and turned wearied from the men and the women with whom she could not talk. For thy father possessed genius, my son, and the people about him were scholars and men of letters; and thy mother, ignorant, often shamed him in their grand home, and joyed more to talk with Crezoni, passing back and forth in his wandering life.

"When thy father strove kindly to teach her, she grew wilful; and she was jealous also—jealous of the women who talked as she could not talk. So it went on."

"But," interrupted Bornito, who listened with hungry eagerness, "tell me only this, my father: who was this stranger?"

"Paul Crezoni."

"Paul Crezoni?" exclaimed Bornito, a vision of the yellow merry face, as he had last seen it, touched with mocking laughter and the tint of the moonlight, rising before him.

"Paul Crezoni," repeated Père Drouard, "the one to whom thy mother turned in her trouble,

and who helped her back to this country. For, matters becoming worse and worse, thy mother at last, taking scant funds, made her way over the ocean to a Northern city, traveled thence to the coast below, and sent a letter summoning thy grandfather.

"A few months later, thou wast born. Thy grandfather and thy mother lived together in a fisher-settlement on the Gulf coast. Twice a year, thy grandfather journeyed to the De Villenaret plantation, talked with the laborers, hearing news of thy father—twice a year, saw Dominique Saturni in the city below, the friend to whom he revealed thy birth and the name of thy father.

"After one of these journeys, he came back with the tidings of thy father's death. The Bornitos had lived many generations on this bayou."

"But yes—many generations," repeated Bornito.

"And thy grandfather, being an old man, longed for his home, and so persuaded his daughter to return. The rest, my son, thou knowest."

"But my father—" commenced Bornito.

"Tried to find thy mother; even in secret sent men hither to this bayou. Of thee, he never heard. Probably the trouble killed him, for he loved his wife. If she had been dead, he might have forgotten; but living"—there the priest paused a moment, then added impressively: "Living troubles, my son, are hardest to bear.

"Thy father traced his wife as far as this country, and with Crezoni. Here he lost all clue. He died in France; he is buried there."

"And why," asked Bornito, passing his hand over his head, striving to collect his thoughts, "why did not my mother give me my father's name?"

"That," said the priest, "I cannot tell, except that she designed to keep thee in the life she loved, and guard thee from the gold which had helped cause her sorrow and the death of Antonio Saturni through her deceit."

"Ah," said Bornito, "I see now; she gave me to Dominique—she tried to wipe out her sin. But"—he paused here a moment, then his face glowed—"Père Drouard," he cried, rising and standing erect, drawn to his full height, "Père Drouard, I am then Leon Bornito de Villenaret, and I shall be rich."

"It is so," said the priest, gravely; "for see: all thy father's fortune fell to his sole nephew, Jean de Villenaret, and he would have kept thee as thou art. The threads of life are sometimes strangely woven," continued Père Drouard.

"Paul Crezoni was, 'mid his wanderings, seized with a strange desire to visit his old home. Two days and nights he wandered about, coming through the swamp from the De Villenaret fields, peering through the tangle at thy hut here, and, at the fisher-settlement below, by night, visiting the old fisher-grounds. He was lamed slightly, when a boy, by a fall from a tree, and he dared not show himself, lest the old friends should remember that halt, which had grown with age, and the vendetta pursue him.

"One morn, he talked with a child who had gone to the swamp for moss, and the boy told of thy grandfather's and thy mother's death; also, he told of thee. Thy existence was a great surprise; and, one day, while he yet watched thy home, pondering whether he might dare visit thee, and question thee as to what knowledge thou mightst hold of thy birth, he saw the gay party enter thy house, and with them De Villenaret.

"Instantly there came to him the thought—the inspiration, he called it—to make out of thy existence a fortune. Curious, he entered thy home, and on the altar saw this urn, which he remembered as thy father's first gift to thy mother after marriage, and out of which they drank wine together, pledging each the other, on their wedding-night. It was thy father's old college drinking-bowl, and, as thou seest," continued the priest, picking up the delicate bit of porcelain, "stamped with the arms and initials of the Villenaret family."

"Ah!" exclaimed Bornito, remembering he had thought this stamp but the sign of the maker.

"My son," continued Père Drouard, "Paul Crezoni had forgotten even the church in which thy parents were married; but within this urn he found proof—found all he needed."

"How?" asked the young man, lifting his eyes expectant and questioning.

"Thy mother never told thee the contents of this scapular?" asked the priest, taking it in his slender hand.

"Yes," answered the other, "I remember it hanging on her bosom always, and she told me it was part of the cross she wore; and, when she was dead, Mère Corbi, a woman in the settlement below, took the scapular from her neck, and gave it me, and I laid it, as holy relic, on the altar and within the urn."

"Part of a cross indeed, my son, part of that cross which she bore through the last sad years of her life. See, then," continued Père Drouard, opening the soft leather and drawing thence a tightly-folded paper, "if thou canst read—"

Bornito reached forth his hand and took two opened papers, creased in many folds, and, knitting his brows, slowly deciphered the writing.

The first was a copy of marriage-certificate between Jean de Villenaret and Louise Bornito. The second, copy of baptismal register, stating that the babe of Jean de Villenaret and Louise Bornito had been christened, with all the rites of the Roman Church, as Leon Bornito de Villenaret.

"Before coming to thee, I have seen, my son, that these papers bear truth—have visited the church where thy parents were married, and have talked with the priest who christened thee during his yearly visit to the Gulf-coast settlement, deeming thee but the child of plain fisher-people."

"And I," again said Bornito, lifting his head, as he held the yet opened papers, "I am Leon Bornito de Villenaret, and I shall be rich."

"My son," said the priest, gravely, "remember this: riches are a temptation and a snare, good only when they work good."

"But it is good that I will work—good. See, then," exclaimed Bornito, his eyes glowing: "is it not good to save the innocent from evil? And it is that—that which I will do—that—ah! what may I not do?" he added, his heart swelling and a tender light creeping into his soft eyes, as with his brown hands he folded again the creased papers and laid them back in their leathern case.

"May angels and saints guard thee," said Père Drouard. "I have heard thou art honest and good. See that this heritage bring not evil into thy life. And now, my son, it grows late. Let me but see thee replace thy treasures on the altar within, and then thou mayest row me to the wharf. And, as we go, I will instruct thee what movements to make for the gaining of thy patrimony."

Thus saying, Père Drouard got up from the low bench, and, with Bornito, walked toward the palmetto hut.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was now late evening. The sun had sunk in depths of gold and purple on the distant horizon; violet and yellow water dashed against the western sky; and the evening star, like a lantern lighting the way to heaven and those mysterious gates beyond, shone calmly in the darkening firmament.

A lake-breeze floated over the broad water, crept among the rustling cane, swept softly through the fisher-huts, and played about Bornito's bared head. He looked aloft, and, as he

rowed, the past, the present, the future stretched like wide fields about him. That picture looking down from the De Villenaret walls—he knew now why those eyes followed, haunting—his mother's eyes—his mother's face, beautiful and winsome as when she had brightened her French home, fresh with the charm of her dark rich loveliness.

There was hope and joy and gladness unspeakable in his heart—the song rose to his lips; but he repressed it, as a memory of that dead one, lying in the city near, came to his mind—with this memory, suddenly, a revelation—a horror—a blackness falling like a pall over Dominique—old Dominique, whom he loved, and who loved him. Almost as father and son they had been, these two, all the long years of his swamp-life.

The strong man grew weak—the oars rested like weights in his hands—the boat floated without guidance—his head fell—with lightning swiftness, his mind traveled through the story of Paul Crezoni, the man who had fallen by vendetta—by Dominique Saturni's vendetta, he to whom his mother had brought a great life-sorrow. Perhaps now—perhaps already—justice tracked the old man—weak, helpless. Père Drouard had not said, but Bornito knew.

And then strength returned. He seized his oars, rowed hastily 'twixt the bayou-banks, and, drawing up his boat at the narrow board where he had been used to call for Dominique when they two went forth to the lake-fishing, stepped out and hurried forward.

On the porch stood Barbara, her little hands clasped around the slender porch-post, her cheek pressed against the hard wood. In the gloaming, he could not distinctly see her face, but a faint light coming from the opened door showed her form, slight and singularly graceful, in its attitude of drooping weariness.

"Where is thy grandfather?" he asked, hurriedly.

"Many have already asked me that question this day, Leon," she answered, in a slow tired voice, without changing her position. "When I saw thee coming, I thought thou mightst bring me tidings."

"What dost thou mean, Barbara?" he cried, excitedly.

"I think thou knowest, Leon. But a half-hour since, I saw thee with the stranger who brought thee news of Paul Crezoni's death."

"Speak yet more plainly, Barbara."

"I think, then, there is no need to say more, Leon," she replied, lifting her head, unclasping her hands, passing them over her brow, and pushing back the soft hair.

"Surely, then, thou dost not think—" he cried, amazed by her calmness.

"I do not think," she interrupted. "I know," here her voice grew hard, vibrating almost fiercely, "I know the man wronged my Uncle Antonio—deceived him who was his friend—and so, to my grandfather, brought the great pain of his life. Who else might avenge the wrong? There was no younger son; there was only Barbara—little Barbara."

She struck her breast fiercely, as she spoke, with her small hand tightly clenched, and, even in the twilight, Bornito could see her dark eyes flash, as scorning her girlhood.

He was speechless with surprise. All his life, he had known this girl. As when a fair hill, softly wreathed with vine and blossom, and smooth with green turf, shoots forth suddenly hot fire, so now this Barbara, who ever had seemed, to him, gentlest and tenderest of earth's children.

"You forget," he said, softly, "it was my mother who—"

"I forget nothing," she cried. "Thy mother made atonement, gave thee her own name—so long ago, my grandfather told me—bade me take all the Bornitos to my heart, and hold them there as friends."

A harsh laugh here broke on the air.

"Eagles mate not with sea-gulls, Barbara," cried Mère Corbi, from her low seat in the doorway; "and he, Leon, who talks with thee, is De Villenaret, a rich planter. Ah, ha! the secret has been mine many years." She laughed again. "The sick and the dead, the sick and the dead," she moaned, rocking herself back and forth, "they tell to me their tales, they make to me their confession."

"Leon a Villenaret, Leon a Villenaret," repeated Barbara, as one striving to understand.

"It is true, Barbara," said Bornito, quietly. "Some day, I will tell thee—"

"Not so," cried Mère Corbi, coming forward. "I will myself tell the little one—the child of my heart," she added, tenderly. "Go thou," here her voice grew stern, "go thou, Leon Bornito de Villenaret," she stepped quite near, almost hissing the whispered words into his ear, "and, if there is in thy heart a bit of love for Dominique, seek and hide him—get him off to the Gulf-lagoons below. Men have been here to-day, and the hut is watched, and we dare not move."

Bornito did not wait to hear more.

"Good-night, Barbara," he whispered. "I will do what I can: take hope."

She did not reply; and, as he gained his boat and rowed off, looking back, he could see her again leaning against the slender post, her hands

clasped, her cheek pressed on the hard wood, and the light behind streaming over her drooping form.

"Fierce and tender," mused Bornito, wondering as he thought of Barbara in her anger; and then his mind turned to the duty before him. He looked at the heaven; stars were faintly gleaming.

On the bank above, he halted, seeking Antonio's grave—a lonely spot. Tall grass waved over it, and the wind sighed above cypress-branches draped in their dismal hanging of moss; but Dominique was not there.

He rowed yet further on, landed by a sharp bend, where they too had gathered palmetto in the long years gone, stood amid the dense clump, whistling softly the call with which each had summoned the other, in those dead years. Only the wind answered.

He sought his own lonely home, threaded the tangle lying around, pausing here and there to call and to listen, and, when no answer came, went again over the dark water, yet calling softly by each bayou-bend, till there rose in sight the wreathed pillars of the ruined mill. A great owl, sending forth its mournful cry and lifting its dark wings, flew from the vined arch to the blackness of those denser woods beyond; otherwise, all was silence.

A memory of that fair April day, when he had poured his gold here among the rushes on this bank, came to his mind, and, amid the gloom in his heart, like a light from heaven, fell the tender glance of those blue eyes. He threaded the vine-grown ways of the old mill and the dark swamp-background, returned to his boat, rowed yet deeper into the black solitude, stepped within the dense maze of sword-cane stretches, and forth upon the small open spaces of trembling prairie. Six hours—six long hours, Bornito searched in vain; only night-birds and shrill insects and the soft south-wind answered his calls.

Discouraged, anxious, wearied in mind and so in body, he sought again his lonely home. On the bank, Bisqua rested. He crept forward, and Bornito, stooping, patted his head.

"We cannot find him, *mop ami*," he said, sadly; "but to-morrow we will search again."

He looked above. The stars marked third morning-hour.

"Three; I will sleep till five," he thought, hastening within his home.

He did not even close the wooden door, but, drawing off his great boots, threw himself, yet dressed, into his low hammock, and, closing his eyes, fell soon into heavy sleep.

And, after a while, when all was silent on that lonely bayou-bank, a bent figure, stealing from the tangle, passed through that opened door, and with stealthy step crept to the hammock where Bornito slept.

Dominique had come.

Dominique had at last answered Bornito's call.

The wind blew gently in, and the faint light from a gibbous morning moon—red and gory, as if bleeding—touched the hammock and the sleeper.

Dominique did not hesitate. With a quick movement, he lifted his hand. Something long and bright gleamed in the moonbeams. When the old fisherman came forth, he ran with weak trembling steps—ran, as if hunted, into the tangle of the swamp beyond.

CHAPTER XIX.

SOFTLY the early morning winds moaned around that lonely hut. They strayed in, wandering over the pale brow of Bornito.

There was a dark pool on the floor under the low hammock. Without, the stars yet shone; the moon yet hung gory and red; the bayou caught their reflection on its deep bosom; the rushes waved, the water-vines floated, and all was as it had ever been. Only within, a great stillness had fallen over a strong young life.

After a while a new day dawned, and a long sunbeam flickered about the white face. Yet a little later, there came the sound of voices and the thud of a boat-grapple thrown out among the rushes on the bank.

"I think we are too late, uncle," said Mary Gaillard, pointing toward the opened door; "he is already gone. We ought to have waited till the hour appointed."

"Nay, the opened door is but proof of his propinquity," objected the professor, stepping ashore. "What do you demand as fee?" he asked of the fisherman—old Edwa Corbon, who, selling his ware that morning at the wharves on the lake-shore, had consented to row them to Bornito's hut.

"Eh, monsieur?" the old fellow answered. "See, den, eef Leon may be een 'ees 'ouse, yaïsse. I t'ink no—me. Dominique—dat ole man w'at you see sometime—you kno'? Bien—'ee ees barrest fo' vendette; an' Leon, 'ee 'unt—'ee try sev dat ole man, I t'ink me. I don' kno', mais I t'ink dat eet may be so, yaïsse."

"How?" cried the professor, standing startled.

Miss Gaillard also turned to listen.

"Well, I don' kno', mais," and then the old fisherman, in his broken English, related the

finding of Paul Crezoni, his death by vendetta, and the search for Dominique.

"Why did you not tell me this before?" cried the professor.

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"'Ow I kno' Leon not hat 'ees 'ouse, eh? Ah, ecoutez!" continued the fisherman, holding up his yellow hand and bowing his head to listen. "'Ee come, I t'ink—yaïsse."

The professor also listened and waited.

"Non, eet as not Leon," presently he exclaimed, "I 'is 'ee kno'," here the old fellow nodded his head, "'ee kno', I t'ink, w'ere Leon may be."

"It is a priest who comes," said the professor.

"Oui, le père 'oo was wid Leon las' night," rejoined the fisherman, "an' de sem sailore w'at rho' 'eem las' night."

Meantime, Miss Gaillard had crossed the bank toward the hut. She peeped cautiously through the opened door. All was quiet. She stepped within, stood an instant uncertain, then, seeing the hammock occupied, and thinking the young man yet slept, turned to go out, then paused.

That long sunbeam had grown in strength. It fell over Bornito's white face, and touched into red tints that dark pool on the floor below.

The glow on her cheek faded, the sweet shy look in the violet eyes died—one instant, stiffened by horror. She stood; then, with a face white as the face of the quiet sleeper, staggered forth into the brightness of the morning.

CHAPTER XX.

"THERE is hope, Mary," said Professor Gaillard, some three hours later, coming to the old willow where she sat, still cold and stricken with horror. "The flame of life burns feebly. I have dispatched for the best nurses. Ah, that my rara avis should develop into the son of my old friend! A rich chrysalis—a gem of the purest tint. My heart warmed to him from the first, as"—here the professor paused, then added—"as it never warmed to that miscreant nephew. Père Drouard tells me he has already arranged for flight to France. It was for the purpose of imparting this information to the heir-at-law that the priest journeyed hither—a lucky journey. His assistance was of incalculable importance—not being altogether ignorant of surgery. The physicians protest they could have done no better. Ah, here he comes! What is it? No ill news?" cried the professor, anxiously.

"My daughter," said the priest, stepping forward, "our sick son asks to see you."

She got up, trembling—white: the earth swayed, the green rushes rocked as her little feet passed over them, and in the low doorway she paused a moment, seeking calmness.

On the bed he rested, his strength gone, his brown hands—pale now—lying helplessly across the blue blanket.

He lifted his eyes as she came near, and the joy of his heart shone from their depths. A tender wistfulness crept into them, and she did not shun their love, but, like a pitying angel, bent low, saying softly: "I have come, Leon."

As he listened, a light like a great glory spread over the pale face.

He had signed for paper and pen, and they had placed a white sheet under his right hand and a pen within his trembling fingers. He looked down on the paper now, and, with evident pain, slowly but clearly traced in French these words:

"To Mary Gaillard, I give all that I own.
LEON BORNITO DE VILLENARET."

The pen fell from his grasp—he had again drifted into the land of shadows.

A great agony entered Mary Gaillard's heart. She crept forth into the brightness of the day, and again seated herself under the old willow. There came the memory of all the tenderness and care he had thrown about her, since that early April day when the poison-vine touched her cheek—from then, till now—now, when, with his dying hand, he had poured before her the wealth whose pleasures he had never tasted, even as he had poured before her the scant earnings of his hard life.

Day by day, she had learned to say with Barbara: "There is not anyone more brave, more true." Day by day, his pure strong manhood, unfolded here within the solitude of the swamp, had touched the deeper chords of her nature, till responsive, through all, there rang the rich anthem of her love. Like a requiem, it waited now, as she sat there in the sunlight, while he, perhaps, was drifting from its brightness—away, away.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ALMOST two years have passed.

Gerton Vanderlich long since made confession, was forgiven, and has ceased sowing the "wild oats" of misery.

Beside Antonio's grave, old Dominique sleeps. He was found there, dead.

The hut falls fast into decay; for Barbara and Mere Corbi live now on a lagoon, near the wild Gulf-shore.

Bornito's hut yet stands, yellow and gray against the swamp-tangle, and Bisqua still flounders among the green rushes, both guarded by old Edwa Carbon. The aged fisherman sits on the bank, and, while smoking, tells to those who listen the story of the blue-eyed Northern maiden and the swamp-fisherman Bornito.

For Bornito passed beyond to golden gates; one fair morning, glided by the fisher-settlement forth over the lake-water, all yellow and glowing with the brightness of a rising sun—the golden gates of a new earth-life, at whose portals, tender and lovely, there waited the blue-eyed virgin of his heart's love.

Many countries have seen Bornito; several tongues now flow softly from his cultured lips. Like a young king, he walks the land of the Villenarets; and, this March day, while the white blossoms of orange-trees breathe their rich fragrance, his heart travels to the coming month—and lo! a fair bride passing with him through the vista of dawning years.

And, day by day, in her Northern home, Mary whispers: "There is not anyone more brave, more true," and, looking into the beautiful urn which he has given her, sees nestling there the witching loveliness of an April day. Cane waves yellow against a turquoise sky, iris lifts soft faces amid the green growth of a moss-hung swamp, the water of a black bayou creeps between matted banks; over all, there rests the beauty of golden sunlight; over all, there float, in memory, echoes of that sweet and plaintive cry: "Prie-Dieu, prie-Dieu." It is the cry of earth to heaven, and, like incense, rises along life's stream even as ALONG THE BAYOU.

AUNT HANNAH'S COURTSHIP.

BY CLARA AUGUSTA.

"WELL, Clara, let's see; it's as much as a whole year since you've been here, ain't it? Yes, yes, I remember now, it's a year and one week, concisely; because I know I had just finished spinning my mixed wool—the last of the beautiful fleeces that grewed on old Humpback. My husband, poor, dear man! bought her of an auction feller out in York state, and we allers kept her wool for stockings, 'cos, you see, it was finer and not so *nubby*.

"Now the way that ar' sheep died was raily presbyterious! You see, one mornin', Micajah, yer uncle, he says to me, 'Hannah, I kinder feel as if old Humpback wouldn't live much longer, she's ben ailin' for a good spell, and you'd better be a little more savin' of that wool of her'n, and knit the tops and toes of yer stockings out of white.'

"I 'poohed' at him, and sez I, 'Law! Micajah, the sheep's well enough. Do put on your boots and go to the barn, if you're a-going to-day! Don't set there snuffin' ashes any longer.'

"Ye see, Micajah had a wonderful habit of gittin' up and settin' down by the fire with a boot in each hand, and there he'd set in his stockin' feet till I got breakfast ready. I never allowed myself to get in the notion of scolding, but it allers did raise my 'Ebenezer' to see anybody settin' round so shiftless.

"Wall, at this ere broad hint, he pulled on his boots awful spry, and went to the barn. I kept on gettin' breakfast. I can remember as well as if 'twas yesterday, what I was a-cookin'. Let me see, biled pertaters—we did use to raise the best pertaters that ever you did see; there was the 'Pink-eye,' and the 'Rohan,' and the 'Cranberry,' and the 'Long Red.' Well, I was bilin' pertaters, and then I had pork, good, fat, salt pork to fry—we allers got our hogs so fat that the pork would fry itself. There's some folks, now, thinks a hog can live on gravel-stones. But as I was sayin', I had pork and sassingers, and good corn bread, and some baked beans that was left from my dinner the day before—I allers gather up the fragments, for I do think it is a sin to waste vittels.

"But there, what's all this to do with the old sheep? I do think if anybody calkerlates to tell a story, they'd better tell it, and not go off on

some long rigmarole about nothing. Now there's the young widder Martin, she's the greatest case to tell a story that ever you seed. She'll go all over creation arter nothin', and that ar' critter actilly thinks that my Cicero Elelad is a-gwine to be ketched in her yaller false curls! That critter my son's wife! I'd rather marry him to a painted rag-bag and done with it! Why, they do say that 'tis a fact that she dabs her face with buttermilk to make it look white, and rubs mullen leaves on'her cheeks to make um red, and puts ile on her hair, and—and—well, where did I leave off? Wall, I remember: I had just put them beans into a pint bowl—no, I'm not certain but that striped bowl held a quart. Yes, it did; I had jest put the beans into a *quart* bowl, and sot um onto the tea-kettle to warm, when in come yer uncle as fast as he could 'put,' with his eyes awfully stretched, and his mouth wide open. 'Oh, Hannah!' sez he, 'Humpback's gone! poor, old, faithful critter!' As he said this, he looked jest for all the world as he did when he asked me, one night a good while ago. But there, I might as well tell you how I cum to have yer uncle, and done with it.

"Ye see, I was born and brought up in Tattleville, and yer uncle, he lived over to Pumpkin City. They allers called it so, because the folks over there had a good deal to do with pumpkins. They used to say that Pumpkin City folks eat bread and pies made of pumpkin, used the leaves for pie-kivers, the seeds for tea, the stalks for clothes-pins, and the shells—only think of it, child! they hadn't a bowl over there that warnt made out of pumpkin shells! But there, you know, if folks couldn't talk they couldn't say nothin', and I do happen to know that all that ar' stuff warnt true.

"Wall, one time Deacon Trisingle took it into his hend to have a big husking-party. I was acquainted with Jerusha Trisingle, the deacon's oldest daughter. The deacon, he was a widower, and Jerusha had the heft of the work to do, so the day afore the huskin' she sent over arter me to come over and help her get ready. I went, and put on my new calico gownd—there, how well do I remember that gownd! it was a red and yaller stripe, with a sprig of green roses every now and then on it. It was made with

short sleeves, so I put on my long sleeved spencer; that was afore these basket waists cum in fashion; we didn't have no sich shaller names in them good old times.

"Arter I was fixed, I went over to the deacon's. Laws-a-massy-sake! sich a looking place as that ar' kitchen was, I never did see! They had been a-churnin', and there sot the churn in the middle of the floor half full of buttermilk; and the dinner-dishes warnt washed, and the cat was actilly up in the sink smelling of the butter-ladle. Wall, I went to work, and the way things had to stan' round warnt slow. I made all the beds, and washed the dishes, and sot things to rights, and then I done the cooking. Sakes alive! it did take the master sight of spice and sugar, but Jerusha was determined to have things nice, 'for,' sez she, 'pa has gin some of Pumpkin City fellers an invite, and I want them to know that there's somebody in the world besides the city folks!'

"By sunset everything was ready; the biggest pewter platter was scoured and put in the best room; for in them days, arter the corn was husked and supper exposed of, it was the custom to rejourn to the fore room and spend an hour or two in 'plays:' and 'rolling the plate' was one of the best plays we had.

"I sot all the pies on the great meal chist in the rough room to cool, and a smashing lot there was of um, too. It would hev done your soul good to hev seen um.

"By the time we'd got all fixed, the deacon and his hired men come in to luncion. Deacon Trisingle complimented me on my red cheeks; said they looked like a big Baldwin apple! he was a very poetical man, the dencon was.

"Arter I'd helped Jerusah clear up and milk, I went home to take off my sponcer and give my hair an extra twist. About seven o'clock I went back agin, and there was a sight of girls there. The men folks had all gone to the barn, but the girls wanted to smooth their hairs, so they hadn't went. There was Debby Bean, and Becky Derbon, and Sally Hedgewood, and Polly Dixon, and Kitty Blake, and as the 'pothecaries say about their patent medicines, 'others too humorous to mention.'

"We all went in a heap to the great barn, and there sot the boys a-huskin' away like all possessed. Room was made for we gals pretty soon, and we was as bizzzy as the bizziest. Everybody (that is all the boys) was trying to find a *red-ear* of corn, and the fun about it went round lively.

"I kinder cast 'sheep's eyes' around, and seed a good many strange faces that I knew cum from Pumpkin City. Jest between you and I, I took

a terrible shine to one feller that sot almost opposite to me, he looked so spry and peart. Byrne-bye up he jumped and hollered, 'I've got a red-ear; now, gals, look out!' And I tell you, he did flourish round there among the gals to an awful rate. I do believe he kissed Poll Dixon full a dozen times! (For my part, I never could see what there was so detracting about that gal, but all the boys was a trailing arter her.) I felt quite jellus of her, but my jellusy was precipitated when he cum to me. 'Laws-a-massy!' sez I, 'I never can let you! go away. I ain't in favor of sich doing!' But he never paid a bit of attention to that, and kissed me full as many times as he did Poll Dixon. (how jellus she was) I felt my face in a-blaze—I was actilly ashamed. But he sot down beside me, and broke off the hard cobs for me in sich a perlite way, that we soon talked away like old relations. Arter awhile the barn floors was cleared, and the yellow corn lay in big, shiny heaps by the hay-mows. Then all hands of us started for the house. The men, they stopped at the pump to scour up their hands and faces, and we gals got supper ready.

"Arter supper was over, we all went into the fore room and sot down. The old pewter platter was soon found out, and all hands went to playin'. I don't know how many times Micajah (the feller that I liked) kicked that platter over on purpose to have me judged; but I didn't care for that, as I most allers had to kiss Micajah or make a 'bob sled' with Micajah, or a 'hen-coop' with Micajah.

"There was a great heap of fire-coals in the fire-place, for 'twas a cool evening, and as Micajah went to kick over the platter as usual, his foot slipped, and that ar' platter went rite into the middle of them fire-coals! How he did jump. But 'twarnt no use, for afore anybody could ketch it one half of it was melted rite off! Micajah he felt awfully about it, but Jerusha told him not to lay it to heart so, and we went on with our plays.

"Somebody said 'play Copenhagin.' I called Jerusha out in the entry, and sez I, 'What'll you do for a rope?' 'Oh,' sez she, 'we'll oncord a bedstead;' so up stairs we went and tumbled off beds and bedding, and got the bed-cord; and sich a time as they did have with it! Micajah kept strikin' at my hand all the time.

"When we got ready to go home, the boys all went out doors and stood ready to ketch their favorite gals as they come out, and don't you think, the minnit I stepped my foot on the doorstep, up cum Micajah and stuck up his arm to me. Jest to spite Poll Dixon I took it.

"That was the way our 'quaintanceship begun, and afore we'd got to my home. Micajah asked

me to 'keep company' with him. I didn't know what to tell him, at first, but I thought of Poll Dixon, and told him I should be happy to see him at our house any time.

"Wall, he didn't need no second invite, for every Sunday evening over he'd come, drest up in his go-to-meeting-ables, and there he'd stay till the roosters crowed in the mornin'. Byme-bye, one evening, or morning rather, jest afore he was a-gwine to start to go home, he give his new hat a twirl or two, buttoned up his coat, onbuttoned it agin, and sez he, with a dreadful cough that made me shudder, it sounded so much like the cough that allers goes with the measels,

'Hannah, I've been keeping company with you considerable of a spell—ahem! and I've been thinking of changing my siterwation, and—ahem! in fact, I want to marry *you*!'

"Wall, I needn't tell ye what *I said*, for you know I had him whether I said yes or no. Poor, dear man! how tickled he was!

"You ought to have seen him when our darter Hepzibah Abigail got so's to go alone, a tickleder critter you never seed! Speaking of her, makes me think, did I ever tell you how Hepzibah Abigail come to be called so? Wall, ye see—but there, as true as I'm alive, there's that 'rizin' to set."

BARBARA'S AMBITION.

BY J. T. TROWBRIDGE, AUTHOR OF "NEIGHBOR JACKWOOD," &C., &C.

[Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1860, by J. T. Trowbridge, in the Clerk's Office, of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.]

CHAPTER I.

"I HAD the curiestic dream last night, or ruther this morning," said the widow Mayland, arranging the little china teacups—two in number; the last of a set; the same she and her late husband had drank from together, oh, how often! sitting opposite each other at the same little old walnut table at which she now sat with her only son.

She paused, looking into the cups. Perhaps she saw a speck of dust; or maybe visions of the past swept before her—the happy mornings of long ago; the manly, beloved face; the bright bridal days, when the unstained joys of life were as new, and fresh, and pure as the translucent china, since so sadly used by time—of six cups, only two remaining, and one of those cracked.

"A dream!" said Luther, starting as if he himself had just awaked from one. He had been unaccountably gloomy of late. He ate his meals in silence, if he ate at all. He did not sleep well. His face grew care-worn. He carried pieces of paper in his pocket, upon which he wrote mysteriously with a pencil. His mother had watched him with tender solicitude, observing his unspoken trouble. "It is either business, or Barbary Blaxton," she said to herself; but she forbore to question him. It was a week since he had shown an interest in anything beyond the profound calculations that absorbed his mind; and she regarded it as a favorable symptom that he appeared eager to know her dream.

"I was thinking," she said, with a sigh, proceeding to fill the cups from the pewter teapot—"I declare, I wish Mr. Smith's dog would learn to hold his tongue when I am dreaming! He had to bark and wake me up just as I——"

She paused again, taking a "visitor" out of Luther's cup with a spoon, looking very grave; her head, with its ancient cap covering her thin, gray hair, slightly bowed; then a thoughtful smile played upon her pale, simple face.

"'Twas the curiestic dream!" passing the cup to Luther, "I was standing on the bridge, looking up the street—seems to me I was waiting for you; when all to once I heard a noise, and looked, and see the underpinning of the store all cracking and crumbling to pieces—

what seemed to be stones I thought was nothing but sand—and then the whole building was a toppling, just ready to fall. Why, my son, what makes you look so pale?"

"Strange you should have such a dream as that!" said Luther, nervously buttering his toast.

"Nobody seemed to be afraid, though every minute I thought the store was going to tumble down. Fact, nobody but Follen & Page appeared to know there was any danger; and they had got you to stand under one corner, for a prop; and Mr. Blaxton had lent them his head, which they used to block up the sill, while he stood by and rubbed his hands, and seemed to think it was all just right—and there I stood, and screamed to warn ye, till that plaguy dog barked, and I woko up in the most interesting part."

Luther rose from the table in great agitation, and seized his hat.

"Why, my son, ain't you going to eat any breakfast?"

"Mother, Follen & Page are going to fail!"

"Fail!" ejaculated the widow. "How you talk!"

"Oh! I might have known it—I was sure something was wrong!"

"Then it's business that's been troubling ye so!"

"I don't care much for myself—but Barbarn's father—you know he lent them a thousand dollars—all he has in the world!" said Luther, chokingly.

"Don't be frightened—don't be rash!" entreated the widow. "After all, 'twas only a dream."

"A dream—but one of *your* dreams, mother!"

Indeed, Mrs. Mayland was noted for possessing, in a remarkable degree, that faculty of the soul, that inner sense, which is often most awake when the outer senses sleep. Her mental vision seemed peculiarly fitted to observe, on the horizon of the future, that "refraction of events," which "ofttimes rises ere they rise." Even in her waking, she saw signs, and felt premonitions; but most clearly in dreams, when the world was silent as Eden at the creation of Eve, and the fountain of the spirit, which springs

in the midst thereof, was untroubled by any wind, the forms of truth and shadows of things to come imaged themselves in the calm waters.

There, in the old-fashioned kitchen, the poor widow sits; her hand on the handle of the pewter teapot; a simple, uncultured woman, not conscious of a mission; a careful housekeeper, kind to her cat, thoughtful of the poor, devoted to her son; her life chiefly spent in sweeping, scouring, knitting, baking pies—occupation humble enough; yet within the folds of her delicate brain lie written all the wonders, all the mysteries of the human mind, whereof there is none more wonderful, more mysterious, than this power of dreaming.

There are dreams of various kinds; those of a wanton fancy, running riot; dreams of indigestion, as when you eat too much cheese for supper, and imagine yourself chased by elephants; dreams of a weary or excited brain, in which pictures of the past appear, incoherent, distorted, like your face in a spoon. But the highest dreaming faculty commonly manifests itself in pictorial prophecies. As the winter night paints frost-pictures upon your window-pane, so sleep crystallizes, from the breath and atmosphere of events, vivid shapes, which the morning light finds traced upon the windows of memory; no mere chance-pictures, but the results of law, bearing a symbolical correspondence to the events themselves.

The widow Mayland's dreams were of this order. Luther, who had learned to credit and interpret them, saw, in the figure of the store toppling to its foundation, the truth to which his own forebodings and calculations with pencil and paper had significantly pointed. Yet he had resisted conviction; living on in the sultry air of doubt and suspicion, and the dream had come like a thunder-storm, to clear his sky. Impatient to face the danger openly—resolute to prop up his corner of the falling house, if need be, but also to hold his employers in their places, and to save Mr. Blaxton's head—he turned his back upon his mother's mild counsel, and hurried away.

"I wish that dog hadn't barked, then I might have seen how it would turn out," mused the anxious widow. She drew her chair once more to the table, drank her tea, and tried to eat a little of the brown toast, which had been so nicely prepared, and scarcely tasted. She succeeded in swallowing a few crumbs, assisted by a sense of duty and some apple-sauce. But toast is like certain other good things necessary to our well-being—like knowledge, like piety—which must be received into the constitution with joy

and desire, to insure healthy digestion and assimilation. The widow's appetite was gone; put to flight by its deadly enemy, anxiety; just as the nobler appetites of the soul are driven out and destroyed by vulgar cares. How mournful, what a mockery of life it is, at such times, to sit and nibble your dry crust of bread or of duty; not from love, but habit, or something you call conscience; moistening the sad morsel, not with generous juices of the grateful palate rushing up to welcome it, but with stimulating sips of artificial tea; and solacing your tongue, between bites, with sauce of the apple of temptation!

Noon came, but no Luther, and no news; and having kept the dinner waiting for him an hour, Mrs. Mayland left the table where it stood, untouched, shut the cat out of the kitchen, put on her bonnet, and walked into the village. She entered the store. Appearances were by no means alarming. Loungers were sitting around the door on empty boxes, which they notched with their knives, or drummed upon with their fingers, making trades, or telling stories. Within, the under clerks were attending to their customers with all the assiduous politeness for which they were noted. The bland Mr. Follen, senior partner, was talking to a wealthy farmer in his smooth, low tones, and Mr. Page was gossiping gayly over the counter, with the young minister's fashionable wife.

"Foolish," thought the widow, as she glanced around upon the lively scene—"foolish enough, to imagine Follen & Page are going to fail!"

But where was Luther? While she was looking for him, something descended upon her like a mist. All things changed. The people around her talked and laughed the same, but on every face was a mask, and while the masks grimaced and assented, the faces behind were sad, or crafty, or careworn—some of them corpse-like. Under the smiling and painted exterior of the young minister's wife, darkened a countenance full of anger and disgust. A pale, restless ghost shrunk within the gay disguise of the junior partner. Even the bland Follen's visor was transparent, and beneath it grinned, somewhat troubled, a determined and malignant visage. Then again, as in her dream, she saw the store toppling to its foundation, her son still serving as a prop, but now struggling desperately to raise the corner sufficiently to get Mr. Blaxton's head from under the sill.

"Where is Luther?" asked the widow, coming to herself.

"He is absent just now, on a little matter of business," said Mr. Follen, with a smooth-

ness, a smiling condescension, altogether imitable.

CHAPTER II.

Mrs. MAYLAND returned home with a sad heart; prepared an early supper, thinking Luther would be very hungry when he came; waited hour after hour, sitting up for him until midnight, then with a weary sigh, and a tallow candle, going to bed. She had no more dreams that night, for reasons.

The next morning she set out to return to the store. But she had scarce stepped into the street, when an unaccountable change was wrought in her feelings. It seemed as if a crisis had passed. The anxious tension of her mind relaxed. She looked up, and around, and saw how beautiful was the day. All night she had heard a wretched wind moaning about the house; but now perfect calmness, a Sabbath peace, rested upon the earth. The October sky was soft and clear. The hazy hill-sides basked in the sun. Above, a few white, scattered clouds, like a flock of snowy lambs, couched upon the blue plains of heaven. The village street was spotted with sun and shadow. A few faded leaves fluttered down from the old elms as she walked under them; some rustled under her feet; some were rotting by the roadside. How like her own heart was this autumnal morning, ripe, and mellow, and peaceful; the wretched, moaning night-wind mysteriously fled! It was not now the fragrant spring, not the flushed summer, but the golden October of her life, beautiful even with its fading and falling leaves.

She passed the blacksmith's shop, and saw Mr. Blaxton within, scattering sparks from the anvil, his leathern apron on, his powerful arms bare, and a good head still on his shoulders, notwithstanding her dream.

"There's Mis' Mayland goin' by," said young Master Blaxton, blowing the bellows.

"Look here, sister Mayland!" cried the smith, "Good morning!"

He dropped his hammer on the anvil, returned the iron to the fire, and stood in the shop door, wiping the sweat from his brow.

"There ain't any trouble over there to the store, is there, think?" lowering his voice.

"What trouble do you mean?" replied the widow.

"Wal, I don't know. There seems to be a good many failures, here and there, this fall, and I've heard it hinted Follen & Page ain't likely to get through without a little diffikilty. And as I see Luther drivin' to town yesterday, with Follen's hoss, faster'n I ever see him drive

afore—for Luther ain't none of your harum-scarum boys—I didn't know but something was to pay."

"Why, brother Blaxton," said the widow, "you don't re'ly think there's any trouble of that kind, do you?"

There was art for you, in a woman of fifty! You should have seen the innocent face, the perfectly surprised look with which she appeared to hear, for the first time, the subject mentioned which had for twenty-four hours filled her mind with the most distressing doubts.

"Well, never mind. Mebbly I hadn't ought to've said anything to you about it. I've spoke to Mr. Follen, and he talks fair. I never heard a man tell a smoother story, so I ain't goin' to be made uneasy—though, fact is, if such a thing *should* happen as Follen & Page failin'—but of course there can't be any danger of that. I don't see how it's possible, do you?"

"There's nothing impossible in this world, you know, brother Blaxton. We ought to be prepared for anything."

"That's so, sister; though if I thought *that* was coming, the way I'd prepare for it would be to secure my money. But, you see, I ain't much alarmed," laughed the blacksmith. "If there was any actooal danger, of course Luther would know it, and he'd tell you, and you'd be pretty sure to tell me, under the sarcumstances, I guess. But I won't keep ye standin' here. You better step into the house as you go by; Barbary'll be glad to see ye."

With a lighter heart the smith returned to his work. And the sparks flew, and the anvil rang, and the steel hissed in the water-tank. And the day still smiled without; the trees dropped their golden leaves; the cocks crowed musically, and the hens shook out their feathers in the warm dust of the road. But what ailed the widow? She walked on quickly, stopped, turned back, and then walked on again. She had assumed a new burden; somehow that which had just slipped from Mr. Blaxton's shoulders had alighted on her own, and she did not know what to do with it.

"I'll go back and tell him, sartin's the world! No, I won't neither—I'll just hold my tongue. He'd go distracted if he knew; and, if matters are bad, he'd only make 'em wus—though if Follen & Page *should* fail, and he should lose his money, he'd blame me, and I should blame myself, for not givin' him warnin', and that might make an everlasting trouble 'twixt Luther and Barbary. I declare there's Barbary now!"

"Why, Mrs. Mayland! how do you do?" cried a sweet girl's voice.

There was a little brown cottage, with a row of tall maples before it; a small, neat garden between the trees and the house; and a very young girl skipping along the leaf-strown path.

"Good morning, Barbary!" said the widow.

There was a soft lull in her voice, and a tender, almost tearful emotion in her face, as she gave her hand to the young girl's ardent pressure, and looked into those happy blue eyes.

"You ain't going by, are you, without coming in?" said Barbara, winningly.

"I don't know, dear. I hadn't thought of stoppin'—I don't know but I will, though, just a minute."

"Oh! do; only make the minute an hour! The front door is locked; I'll run around and open it."

The light and graceful form disappeared behind the rose-bushes.

"Strange, what a feeling I have for that girl!" thought the widow. "I feel just like a mother to her since her own mother died, and I can't look at her without, somehow, always thinking of Luther. Bless her! she'll love somebody, some time, and I hope she'll be happy; but, oh! life is full of trials and dangers. How little girls of her age know about it!"

The front door opened, and Barbara appeared, bright and smiling.

"The girls have gone to school, George is at the shop with father, and I am all alone," said the pretty housekeeper.

"What an excellent mother you do make to the younger ones!" exclaimed the widow.

"Oh! I know I don't fill *her* place—that never can be filled!" replied Barbara, tears suddenly dimming her eyes. (It was but little more than a year since she was left motherless.) "But I try to do all she would have me do; and sometimes, as you know, I can't but think she is with me, helping me."

"I don't doubt but she is; and it's a beautiful belief," said the widow. "It seems to me always as if I was going to meet her right face to face, when I come into the house. Just now I saw her over your shoulder, plain as ever I did in my life, Barbary!"

"Oh! Mrs. Mayland, how happy you always make me when you come here!" Barbara, kneeling, pressed the widow's hand to her lips and shed a little April shower of tears upon it. "You make me cry, but it isn't grief. Forgive me!" She sobbed awhile, with her face in Mrs. Mayland's lap, a kind hand caressing her fair curls and beautiful head, a kind voice soothingly

speaking to her, as it were, in her mother's name. "There! I won't be foolish any more!" And brushing away her tears, she looked up with a countenance so softened, so sweet, that the widow thought:

"If Luther could see her now!"

Then Barbara arose, and the two sat together by the open window, the mild October air blowing gently upon them, and the sunshine, glancing through the scarlet maples, falling in slant rays into the room.

"Barbary," said Mrs. Mayland, "you've had as hard a trial as any girl I can see, since your mother went; but it's done you good—there's no telling how much good it's done ye! You was a wild girl before, you know—not a hard-hearted girl, by any means, but thoughtless and giddy. You ain't the same creatur' now, do you know it? though I'm sure you are quite as happy."

"Oh! happier, a great deal happier!" cried Barbary. "But I have to thank you for it. What should I have done, but for you? Other people came and talked to me—so stiff and solemn—and told me it was my duty to be resigned, but I couldn't be; they only made the world look blacker to me, and I was wicked enough to wish they would keep away. But when you came, though you always made me cry, you left with me such a sweet feeling, deep down in my heart—such a love and peace—oh! if you could know how glad and strong it always made me!" said the grateful Barbara.

In such communion, Mrs. Mayland almost forgot the care that had occupied her mind. At the sound of a light-wheeled vehicle, she looked eagerly up the road.

"Who's that, Barbary? look!"

"That—it is"—Barbara blushed deeply—"why, it is Luther!"

"I declare, so it is! Your eyes are better than mine," said the widow. "He's turning up to the shop, isn't he?"

"Yes, and there's father coming out to speak with him. What can be the matter? Father runs back for his hat; now he is getting into the buggy—here they come!"

Luther waved his hand to his mother and Barbara, as he drove rapidly by.

"Some business, I guess," said the widow.

"What a pretty place you have here!"

"Yes, very," stammered Barbara, her eyes following the vehicle. "Father thinks he shall buy it in the spring. Deacon Ward won't sell until he can have twelve hundred down; but father says he can raise that. Follen & Page owe him almost that amount. I shall be so glad

to have him own this house, free from debt—it's what he has been hoping so long and working so hard for!"

The widow's lips quivered, and her eye avoided Barbara's.

"If anybody deserves to have a home he can call his own, it's your father, Barbary. But, after all, what's an 'arthly home to a heavenly one? The things of this world are just like running water. There's always about so much water—a little more or a little less, but it isn't the same—the stream never stops, the waves flow on, the bubbles break, and new waves and bubbles take their places. Just so with life. Everything is rolling on, rolling on, to the sea."

"The waves are events, and we are the bubbles," replied Barbara. "When we break I think we become vapor, and rise up in the beautiful sky."

"That's a pretty idee," said the widow. "Did you ever think how little real hold we have of the 'arth, with all our grasping? Even the trees out there have a firmer hold on't than we have—they are rooted in it, while we only live on it. Strange a man never has a bit of ground he can rely call his own, till he's planted too—in the 'arth, and not on it! It is sown a nat'ral body, and it is raised a spiritual body," said the widow, musingly.

Her eyes were turned upward, her hands were crossed upon her lap; a profound silence followed. Barbara gazed with reverence and affection upon the rapt face of her friend, wondering what visions of truth or of angels filled her eyes of faith. But she felt no idle wish to question her. There are persons of such fullness and purity of character, that the silent influence which passes out from them, though no silent mood of a companion—a jingling, cop-words are spoken, satisfies better than eloquence. It is a dull nature that fails to respect the high, per mind, that, in your deep moments, offers you "a penny for your thought."

CHAPTER III.

"THERE is father alone—what has happened?" exclaimed Barbara.

The widow started. "Why, where was I? Your father?"

"How fast he walks! How excited he looks!" said Barbara.

The flushed blacksmith entered the house, blowing, and fanning himself with his hat.

"Barby—Mrs. Mayland—oh! you desaitful critter!" he cried, shaking his brawny hand at

the widow. "Oh! I'll remember it of you! Barby, Barby, a glass of water!"

The frightened Barbara ran to obey. The big blacksmith walked to and fro, and swabbed his face with his sleeve, and fanned himself, and shook, and laughed.

"That boy Luther, I tell you what—I ain't had such a time afore! Don't be scar't, Barby; it's all right, it's all right!" And Mr. Blaxton drank the contents of the glass his daughter brought him at a breath.

"What's the matter, father?"

"Don't you think, that thousan' dollars't I've been savin' up to buy this place with—you know all about it, Mis' Mayland. Another glass, Barby!"

"Don't drink too much while you're heated, Mr. Blaxton," quietly said the widow.

"Wal, you are the coolest woman! Any other in this town would have let the secret out, when I was talkin' with you this mornin', but you *did* keep on the soberest face!"

"Wasn't it best that I did?"

"Best! I tell ye," cried the burly smith, "if you had gi'n me a hint of what you knew 'bout Follen & Page, I should have run distracted; I should have gone tearin' about the town like a mad bull! And I guess I should have got my monee 'bout as much as you can git the moon out of a pond, by jumpin' in heels over head arter it!"

"What has Luther done?" the widow asked.

"Done! He's got my head out from under the sill!" roared the honest smith.

"Oh! I am glad of that!"

"He told me that dream o' yourn, widder, goin' over, to kind o' break the news to me, easy like, though I had a suspicion what the matter was, the minute I see him drive up to the shop. But, I tell ye, the thunderbolt didn't strike me fair till he'd got me into the countin'-room, and brought Mr. Follen to me, right face to face, an' says he, 'Mr. Follen,' says he, 'fore I had time to ketch my breath, 'this man must be paid,' says he.

"'Paid?' says Follen, with his smooth grin, 'what do you mean?'

"'What I say,' says Luther, and he locked the door. 'He must be paid 'fore either of us leaves this room,' says he.

"Then Follen began to chafe, and champ the bit, and kick, but 'twan't no use; that boy o' yourn held him to it—there wan't no gettin' away—Luther had him, and led him right up to the work, jest as if he'd been tamin' a young colt. It seems he has had things a little in his own hands since yesterday, when he went to

the store and called Follen to an account, and got out of him that they re'ly was preparin' to fall; but he promised to stand by 'em, and help 'em, if they'd deal honorable; and he'd gone to the city to get some notes discounted for 'em at a bank where he knows the cashier; and he'd brought back some drafts, and he had 'em in his pocket there, and says he, taking me by the collar, says he, 'This is an honest man, and a poor man, and whoever suffers, he mustn't; and now,' says he, 'just put your name on the back of one of these drafts for him, and I'll keep it in my hands till he gives me the note'—for, you see, I'd left Follen & Page's note in the till of my chist, here to home. Wal, to out a long story short, the thing was done; and if I ever forget Luther's doin' of me this sarvice—why, then, Barby, I hope you'll show yourself more grateful."

Astonished, and thrilled with joy at, she scarcely know what, Barbara could do nothing but blush and smile, through tears at her father and Mrs. Mayland.

"I am thankful," said the widow, fervently. "I rejoice for you, brother Blaxton! But there's danger of becoming too much attached to the things of this world. I hope 'twouldn't have broke your heart, even if you'd lost the money."

"Widder," said the smith, "that *would* have broke my heart! I've been years savin' up that money, hopin' to buy a place with't some day. I've got a family of children growin' up. I shall soon be an old man, and if I don't, within a few years, have a home of my own for them, and for me in my old age, I never shall."

"But you haven't got your money yet, 'it seems," replied the widow.

"It's in Luther's hands, and I'd trust him with anything!" cried Mr. Blaxton. "There he comes now, with the draft! Barby, run to the till of my chist, and git me that note!"

Barbara skipped from the room, lightly as if she had had wings. Luther, smiling, triumphant, hat in hand, entered. The smith embraced him with enthusiasm—with tears. With silent emotion, Mrs. Mayland looked upon her son, in whom she was never so well pleased. Then Barbara, radiant with modesty, happiness, love, came noiselessly into the room. And that morning, at parting, Luther reverently and tremulously took his first pledge of affection from the pure lips of Barbara.

In a dream of bliss, the young man walked home with his mother. Oh, lovely sky of October! airs so cool and sweet! heavenly haze on the hills! resplendent gold and scarlet of the trees!

music, the softest ever heard, in the gentle murmur of the brook by the roadside, in the light rustle of colored leaves on the ground.

"Mother," said Luther, "I think Barbara likes me. I never felt so sure of it before. She has not always treated me well. I have thought she was capricious, sometimes cruel."

"Why, that's the way with girls," replied the widow. "When they treat you that way, 'pearing to encourage you one day, then, without any provocation, saying or doing something to hurt your feelings, you may be sure they like you—unless it's a heartless coquette, which, of course, we all know Barbary isn't."

Reaching home, the widow made haste to get dinner. The lover was hungry.

"What happened to you, my son, about nine o'clock this morning?"

"Why, mother?"

"Because, just at that time, the strangest feeling came over me! Though I'd been worried all day yesterday, and kep' awake all last night, all of a sudden, just as I was going out of the house, every bit of my trouble seemed to leave me, and I was just as calm as I ever was in my life."

"It was just about that time," replied Luther, "that I got the drafts into my hands, which I had been waiting all night for, and started for home. I felt that Mr. Blaxton's money was safe, and that was all I cared."

"How curis it is!" said the widow.

The result proved that Mr. Follen was something of a villain, and Mr. Page his timid accomplice. It was only through Luther's firmness and sagacity that they were prevented from defaulting, with considerable sums of money on their hands. Their debts to townsmen, who he knew held their notes for borrowed money, or for produce, he compelled them to pay, after which their business was made over to their principal creditors in the city, and that was the last of Follen & Page.

CHAPTER IV.

THE store was closed but for a few days. It was reopened with a new stock of goods, and a new sign over the door. "Cobwit & Co.," a house of distinguished name and immense wealth, had converted it into a branch establishment. The name alone inspired the townspeople with confidence and pride. Mr. Cobwit came out from the city, to look at affairs, and receive the homage of a community which he condescended to honor with his great presence and great reputation. At his departure, he left his mantle with his vicegerent.

Mr. Montey, the head of the new establishment, was a person of fine address, sociability, good looks, and exceedingly handsome whiskers. He was thirty, and a bachelor. He took lodgings at the hotel, drove a gay horse, and made havoc with ladies' hearts.

Luther, who retained his place in the store, and was very useful to Mr. Montey, introduced him one evening to the blacksmith's family. Barbara belonging to the great house of Cobwit & Co., Mr. Montey was not proud.

"He's just the most perfect gentleman ever I see in my life!" Mr. Blaxton declared, glowing with satisfaction, after the polished merchant had taken his leave.

"Gracious! didn't he look sweatmeats at Barby!" observed young Master Blaxton.

Barbara looked very red, and very strange. Luther felt an unaccountable pang. Of course he was not jealous; but as he tried to speak, his heart choked him.

"Say, Barby, wouldn't you like to ride after that smart trottin' hoss of his'n?" continued George.

"Hush yer nonsense, boy!" said the smith, frowning. "Mr. Montey is over thirty year old"—with a thoughtful side-glance at Barbara.

"Ten years—that ain't much difference 'twixt a man and his wife," muttered young Blaxton, who was justly sent to bed for his impertinence.

Somehow, the parting between the lovers was unusually cool that night.

A week later, Barbara did actually ride after that "smart trottin' hoss," with Mr. Montey.

"Do tell!" said the gossips. "I *should* think he'd look higher than that!" "Only a blacksmith's daughter!" "Where's Luther Mayland?" "Won't little Barby feel her consequence now!" with other such charitable remarks.

The invitation had been unexpected. Mr. Barbara thought it would not be polite to refuse it. And Barbara did not have time to ask Luther if she ought to accept it. Even if she had asked him, how could he have withheld his consent? He and Barbara were not engaged, although there had been a tacit and sweet love-confidence between them ever since the affair of the borrowed money.

"I have no right to complain. I ought to be glad, if it was a pleasure to Barbara," said Luther to his mother. But it was quite evident that his magnanimity did not prevent his feeling very unhappy about something.

"Barbary is a young girl yet; and all young girls are vain," said Mrs. Mayland. "No wonder it pleased her to have attentions from a man

that everybody is praising up to the very skies. But I wish she wouldn't."

Mr. Blaxton did not forget his ardent gratitude toward Luther, in his enthusiasm for Mr. Montey.

"I owe everything to that young man!" he one day declared, when the merchant drove up to the shop to see where his horse's shoe pinched.

"He seems to be a fine young fellow. Look at his off foot," said the merchant. "He helped you out of some trouble, I believe?"

The blacksmith hammered the hoof, and told his story.

"No doubt the young fellow meant well," said Montey, carelessly. "But I don't imagine your money was in actual danger."

"Do you think so?" replied the smith.

"I hope the bank pays you interest—where is my whip?"

"No, it don't; I only leave it there for safe keeping. I expect to use it in the spring. I ain't goin' to resk that money agin, I tell you!"

"But you are losing sixty or seventy dollars a year by its lying idle," observed Mr. Montey. "You can't afford that. Besides, banks fail sometimes, you know, as well as traders."

"I've thought of that; but I'm blamed if I know what better I can do," said the smith.

"Let me see—I am going to town to-morrow. I'll ask Mr. Cobwit if he can use it, if you like."

"Wal, that would suit me, of all things," said the smith. He seemed to think the honor alone would be sufficient compensation for lending money to the great house of Cobwit & Co.

The next day Mr. Montey went to town, and the day after he sent for Mr. Blaxton. Cobwit & Co. had concluded to use the money.

"I want you to feel perfectly easy about it, if we have it," said Montey. "I can give you any kind of security you want, if you have any doubts of our paper." The smile with which he said this was very humorous; the idea of anybody doubting Cobwit & Co.'s paper appearing so decidedly funny! The blacksmith blushed. As if *he* could have been guilty of such an absurdity!

"I should be ashamed to ask for security; Cobwit & Co.'s name is security enough for me," said he.

"It's contrary to our custom to borrow such small sums—indeed, to borrow money any way," observed Mr. Montey, writing, "so I'd a little rather you wouldn't speak of it."

Mr. Blaxton blushed again. He had thought that his lending money to Cobwit & Co. would be a thing to be proud of, and to mention with satisfaction.

"Sartin, sartin," he said. "Of course, 'twouldn't be much of an honor to a great firm like yours, to have it said you've borrowed money of me!"

Mr. Montey made out the note. It read, "Twelve months from date, I promise to pay——" but that was only a form, and Mr. Blaxton could have his money at any time, (the merchant said,) by calling for it. It was signed, "Horatio Montey."

"Why, see here, I thought you was going to give the firm's signature," said the surprised blacksmith. "Cobwit & Co."

"That is precisely the same thing. I am the 'Company,'" replied Mr. Montey.

"I don't doubt that, and I don't imagine it makes any material difference; but somehow I kind o' want Cobwit & Co.'s name—just for the looks—just for the sound—if nothing more."

"Oh, I see!" Mr. Montey smiled, tore up the note, and wrote another. "It is precisely the same thing to us," and he signed the name of the firm.

Mr. Blaxton, who knew that the transaction was entirely a personal favor to himself, felt very uncomfortable, on account of the want of confidence he had shown. Moreover, the merchant's easy manners, and fair and obliging disposition, were of so polished a surface that they cast reflections upon the rude and embarrassed smith; and he saw his own roughness and ignorance as in a glass. He accepted the note in its new form; gave in return a draft upon the bank, for the money; thanked, perspired, and apologized profusely, and departed, singularly ill at ease for a man who carried Cobwit & Co.'s paper for a thousand dollars in his jacket pocket. (TO BE CONTINUED.)

CHRISTMAS GAMES.

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pg. 479

CHRISTMAS GAMES.

SEVERAL WAYS OF PLAYING PROVERBS.—As winter approaches, and the long evenings set in, fireside games for the young people will become popular. There are many of these which are not only humorous, but really, in an indirect way, beneficial. "All work and no play," says the old proverb, "makes Jack a dull boy." Judicious merriment improves the health, as well as makes home happier. Among the best of these fireside games, is the game of Proverbs.

The original game is: first send one of the party out of the

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room; you must select a proverb, letting each of the players take one of the words that compose it in rotation, which word they must introduce into their reply to the questions put to them by the absentes on his return; and from these replies he must guess the proverb chosen. The newer version of this is what is called *Shouting Proverbs*; it is managed in exactly the same way, except that, instead of bringing in the word allotted to each player in reply to questions asked them, they all shout their words simultaneously, producing, certainly, a most discordant noise, and making it, moreover, very difficult for the person on whom the duty falls to find out at what the proverb is, unless he happens by good luck to catch a leading word of one which is quite

familiar to him. If not, his only chance is to fix his attention on one of the speakers and try to catch the word spoken by him; should he, however, fail to make the proverb out, if it has been shouted three times, he must pay any forfeit the rest of the company may suggest. Near akin to this is the *Family Sneeze*, where each player takes a syllable such as hish, hesh, hosh, hash, screaming them at the top of their voices all together, the result being as loud and deafening, yet withal as natural a sneeze as possible.

Another way of playing Proverbs—or instead of a proverb you may in this game substitute a well-known verse of poetry—is for the proverb or verse to be spelt out, each player taking a letter as it comes, instead of a word, and every sentence must begin with the letter which the speaker has appropriated. In this game it is not necessary for the player on whom the duty of guessing the verse or proverb devolves to ask questions at all, although he may do so if he thinks it will help him, in which case the person addressed must commence his reply with the letter that has been allotted to him, otherwise this letter must be brought in in general conversation as soon as he who has to guess the verse or proverb makes his appearance.

DORIA'S AFFAIRS.

A SEQUEL TO "DR. WETHERGREEN'S PRACTICE."

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SUSY L——'S DIARY."

CONCLUDED FROM PAGE 215.

CHAPTER V.

DORIA did not at first proceed to write letters. She thought awhile, first, of Captain Brooks, of Mrs. Brooks coming, of the probable import of his yesterday's "if," and whether she should go out with the sailing party that afternoon. She thought that she would go. She would go, effectually taking care of herself. She would let Capt. Brooks and the rest see—why that she was a sort of waif, to be sure, but then as comfortable as if she were the best man's fixture. She would—but, indeed! she would think and plan no more about it. Her way was not so hedged and ditched that she must spend all her tactics and forces in getting forward. These should be held in reserve for less impotent services; for diffusing clearness and agreeable life, day by day, to one and another, on her right hand and on her left. And there the matter was to end, for that time. She would write some letters then; letters to her mother, to Mrs. Ambrose, and they would keep them near them for days, and be much the less lonely for having read them. So good-bye, Captain Brooks; and all the rest there at the lake; and the afternoon sail. *Au revoir.*

On the whole, poor Doria's affairs went badly at the sail. In the first place, she went tripping on the way to the boat, sometimes by Caddy and Dr. Joseph, sometimes by the Dows, sometimes by Ambrose and his little Mary; and, at all times, with a merry sort of self-willed air, that kept all the right arms and all the left arms that would be helping her, essentially at bay. True, she had this thought, now and then, (and it half stifled her too for the moment) that she would feel better having her place, as Caddy and Mary had therein; knowing it and walking composedly in it. She would like the *repose* of the thing. As she hadn't it, however, see! she would go tripping and doing mischief if she could find any to do. Good! Ambrose's handkerchief corner peeped out of his pocket, as if roguishly to see what she roguishly was doing. She would steal it, now that he looked away off the other way, over little Mary's head, and pointed out afar-off the "Lady of the Lake" to her.

She got it! Out of his side pocket too, directly under his nose. She liked that! So did Captain Brooks, cross Mr. Marsh, and the rest who saw it. And this brought them to the boat. She sprang into the boat, the first of all; and deliberately (talking about it all the while) made her choice of the best seat, and sat down in it to see how the matters of adjustment went on with the others.

Captain Brooks came to sit by her. Ambrose helped him over, just as Doria had her mouth open and her head forward to say to Mr. Marsh, who looked from one seat to another, "Come to this seat, Mr. Marsh. I want to talk politics with you." Doria thought it was too bad, that Captain Brooks had come. She was still and a little stiff, in drawing her skirts and shawl aside; insomuch that when she raised her eyes to his, she saw plainly the deprecating expression as if he were saying within himself, "Nay, be gracious toward me, Miss Phillips; for I have given you no reason why you should not be."

The glance somehow made it instantly quiet within her, as she had before this felt that all of his glances had the power to do. She frolicked and defied no more, therefore; but sat talking in a cheerful way of whatever came into her thoughts. Once, in the course of the sail, when she saw that Mr. Marsh, from his solitary end of the boat, looked away with a dark glance over the water, she felt her heart touched for him; and sent this word forward to him, giving it first to Dr. Joseph, who sat before her—"Tell Mr. Marsh I want him to look at that bright point out there where the sail-boat goes round. Ask him if it is not beautiful."

Yes, Mr. Marsh thought it beautiful, he said, after having watched it a moment with brightening features; and he sent grateful looks back to Doria. It was better with him after this. He talked across the Dows, with Ambrose, and liked it; Ambrose was so vigorous! liked it far better for having so pretty, and to a certain extent so appreciative a listener as little Mary. With the Dows he, for his part, had done trying to get along. Mr. Dow was like stone, she like ice to him. Mr. Dow talked politics, but knew little

about them, merely repeating what his newspaper said. Still, he tipped his head and blinked his eyes knowingly; and fancied that he knew *about* as much as any other man. Mrs. Dow was without dogmatism; but so also was she without tact, which was quite as annoying to their sensitive neighbor. He was thinking about it when Doria's words came to him, and wishing, in his logical way, that this world, in the concrete, were somewhat commensurate with this world in the abstract. They touched at an island and went ashore to look for fringed gentians. Hendrick, the artist, found one there the day before he left, and brought it and gave it to Doria.

Doria had trouble in landing. The rocks were not large; but there were many of them scattered along, and water was between them. Mr. Marsh sprang out and held the boat to the rocks by the chain. Mr. Dow followed with his wife, Ambrose with Mary, Dr. Joseph with his Caddy; the boatmen went forward scrambling; and then came Doria, "on her own responsibility," as Mr. Dow had it. But a boulder on which she set a foot, rolled, and she was falling, when Captain Brooks saved her. She sprained her ankle, though; and on that account she was obliged to trust as much to Captain Brooks' arm as to her own feet in getting forward. He looked as if he were concerned for the sprained ankle, of course. He could do no less, with his quick sympathies and kindness; but he did look very well satisfied, very happy. He watched every step she took, as if she were his helpless child. He staid by her when the others went to hunt for the gentians; she sitting on a mossy rock in the warm sunshine, he standing, mostly in silence, close by her side. She spoke now and then upon the sunshine, the lake, and upon gentians. He, however, was no help to her in getting along. When she perceived this, she gave up trying to talk. She merely sat and kept her eyes away on the lake.

He helped her back into the boat; to the shore again when they landed near the house; helped her to the house with slow steps; for her ankle grew lamer and more painful every moment; and, when they reached the house, no one knew so well as he what was to be done for her.

Doria thought that night, that she had done no very great things in the way of taking care of herself that time. She thought that she would try it no more. She would go out no more; her sprained ankle, would be a sufficient plea for this. She would propose going home the next morning. If the rest were not ready, she would go. She wanted to be at home, in that dear place where her mother was; where she could

be quiet and have a chance to attend to herself; to her aching ankle and her confused thoughts. Yes; that was what she would do. She thanked God that there was such a beloved spot for her; such a sheltered spot; thanked him that to-morrow night her head would lie in it; and, as she gave thanks, she fell peacefully asleep.

CHAPTER VI.

THE next morning, thanks to Dr. Wethergreen's arnica and Dr. Wethergreen's rhus, Doria's ankle was so far restored to soundness that she could make it no plea for hurrying home, or for keeping the house when the rest of the party went out. She talked, however, with Dr. Joseph when they were all in the parlor after breakfast, about their going, all of them, the next day; or, at the farthest, the next day but one. She wanted to be at home, she told him, with a grave face, a languid air. She wanted to be there with her mother where she could rest. And as he listened to her with his good, brotherly eyes on her face, it occurred to him that possibly, with Doria and with all those who are, in a way, alone in the world, there must often come fatigue and a want of rest, such as comes sometimes certainly, but far more rarely—in the very nature of their relative circumstances—to those who repose at all times in the strong one at their side, or in the thought of him if he is away. His eyes went from Doria to Captain Brooks, who sat near them at a window seat, with his chin on his hand and his eyes on the scene without. He said to him, "How much longer do *you* stay, Captain Brooks?"

Captain Brooks turned his head to say that he couldn't exactly tell. He thought it would not be long, not more than a day probably after she came—if he waited for Mrs. Brooks. He had just been thinking that, if she stayed much longer, he should not wait for her. He would like, for his part, to leave when they did, to go to M—— with them, and let Mrs. Brooks join him there. Dr. Joseph's face glowed at the plan. So did Ambrose's. Ambrose lay his hand on his shoulder, saying, "That's right, Captain Brooks! the very thing I've been thinking about this morning! For you see the winds will soon be rough up here," pointing to the dark clouds that lay in the west. "I shouldn't like to leave you here. At M—— is the place for us all now. Don't you say so, good Doria?"

Captain Brooks, as well as Ambrose, looked to hear what good Doria would say. He had in fact looked more to her than to Dr. Joseph all along. Little Mary Walton too came close

her, slipped her arm round her neck repeating Ambrose's question, "Won't it be good, Doria, dear, to be there again, all together? Captain Brooks and all? I didn't know that we would have him too there. Won't it be good?"

Doria said, "Yes, dear," and fondled her hand; but she didn't look up. She hadn't at all the appearance of discerning any great good in it. And Captain Brooks seemed to feel that she had not. He was again turning his head away to the window, when Ambrose said, starting impulsively, and taking his hand from his shoulder, "Come out here, Captain Brooks—we want to see Captain Walker before he goes out with his 'Lady,' you know," he added, on their way across the room. "He'll soon be too busy for us."

Dr. Joseph and the rest—or all but Doria—smiled to see him go; smiled to see the old, brisk air of "taking things in hand."

They were gone a long time. Nothing more was seen of them in the parlor until dinner time. Then Captain Brooks, with a face as grave as Doria's, walking by her side to the dining-room.

After dinner it was proposed that they all should go out for their last sail among the islands, from point to point, from light to shade, and from shade to light. Doria couldn't go, she said. And no persuasion could move her. She was cold; she was not really strong and well, she said. And, besides, she had already been out so many times! She would sit there in the warm parlor and read. She would enjoy that much better than going. Little Mary Walton called her "a naughty thing!" but kissed her as she said it; kissed her the last thing before going; and even ran back, when they were all ready in the door, to kiss her again, on each cheek and on her forehead. Ambrose came back and put himself into the parlor door, in part to see what Mary was about, in part to say to Doria, "You miss it, Doria, not going. To-morrow, likely as not, Mrs. Brooks will be here; and then what will you do for the captain's right arm?"

Mary hurried to him, interrupting him with rapid talk about being ready; waiting for him; and with her last "good-bye" to Doria.

The little thing longed to tell him that he mustn't say these things to Doria; that both she and Caddy believed that Doria missed Caddy, and inwardly mourned for her. But when she looked up to say it, he was so far above her and so calm, that her courage failed her. She felt, moreover, that one so noble and so kind as he was, must know at all times what it was good and right to say. So she looked up to him again,

thinking that of all the persons on the earth—not even excepting her father, of whom she held an exalted estimation—the "monstrous large" man at her side was the best, and, to her, the dearest. He seemed to understand that this was what she was thinking, for the glance of his eye and the tones of his voice were very tender, as he said softly to her, "You are a dear little Mary."

CHAPTER VII.

"Oh, that queer fellow, Marsh, had something he wanted them to see down the lake a little way," Doria heard Mr. Dow say in the hall. She heard also several steps on the door stones and in the hall; heard Mr. Dow say farther, as the steps advanced, "Is the captain here, Miss Dow and I came away without them. We didn't——" Doria listened for no more; but leaving her chair with quick steps like a hart that flies, she made haste to get away to her chamber. But she met Captain Brooks at the door. (The Dows had gone directly to their chamber.) He stopped before her; both his imploring eyes and his lips saying, "One moment, Miss Phillips. I want to speak with you one moment."

She turned back with steps loth and slow. She neither looked up nor spoke, as she recrossed the room to her old seat. Captain Brooks, who observed her closely, seemed not at first to know how to begin what he had to say. But soon the faltering manner, the faltering tones were gone; and, in their stead, were the easy attitude, the clear open face and speech, as if he had been thinking, "I am a man in what I have to say; and let what will come of it, I can meet it and bear it like a man."

"Miss Phillips," he began, "our good friend Ambrose has been explaining to me to-day, that that you—in short, that you think me married; married to the Mrs. Brooks who is coming. Or who is *not* coming, as it appears; for I have just had a letter from my only brother, who is her husband, saying that he will be in Boston on the twentieth, and that he wants her to be there to meet him. He has been six months in Sacramento."

He paused here; but Doria did not speak. First with pale then with glowing cheeks, she sat motionless, listening.

"I have had a wife," he added, with softened tones, and drawing near Doria to lay his hand on her chair. "She has been dead two years. She had been two years my wife—two hard years they were for us both; for we were poor and my business was bad. I was an architect, or trying and waiting to be one, at M——."

"At M——?" asked Doria, looking up now with all the interest she could require in his face.

"Yes. My child died there; Dr. Wethergreen and Ambrose both came to me at the time."

Yes, Doria remembered. She remembered with tears in her eyes.

"I went to California soon after," he added, still with subdued tones, and with his hand lying lightly on Dorin's head; for he had seen the tears in her eyes, and felt himself drawn to her by the sight. "I met Ambrose there. And from that hour my way has been easy. He took me in hand, to use his own expressive phrase," he continued, smiling, "and now I have a tolerable fortune, made upon the investment of a principal all his own, in fact."

"He is the best man I ever saw!" cried Doria, her emotion choking her.

"Who is? who is the best man you ever saw?" demanded Ambrose. He was within the room and had overheard the last words.

"Not you! not you!" said Doria, with something of the old lively mockery in her tones and face.

"He, then?" tossing his hand toward Captain Brooks. "Captain Brooks?"

"Yes, Captain Brooks." She did not think but that she would say this with the same tones, with the same lively manner. But there came at once thoughts of his hard life, thoughts that he loved her, that he would choose her to be his companion and comfort; thoughts of all she would be to him; of all he, with his great goodness and talent, would be to her. And one far less interested in her words, far less observant than Captain Brooks, would have felt what it meant, the slowly bowed head, the mellowed tones.

How much he felt it, no words of his, if he had essayed them, could have told. He took her hand in his and bowed his lips to it. He looked in her half-upturned face and said, "Miss Phillips!—beloved!" And that was all. That was their betrothal. He and she, loving God, trusting in God even in a deeper way than they loved and trusted in each other, could thenceforth have rest; in God and in each other, in this life and in the eternal.

Kind-hearted Ambrose, with laughter and yet tears in his eyes, said, "Good! Bravo!" adding after a slight pause, "this is what I meant and planned before we came from California, you see, Doria. After we came, I had him there several days at the City Hotel, at M——, trying to think how I could bring you together in such a manner that your 'folly' shouldn't take alarm and come

popping in to spoil things. I knew that, if I brought him in as a single gentleman, you would be seen, directly, trudging off toward one of the poles. Toward the south pole I supposed it would be, because that is farthest. It happened just right here. Good! I'm glad! I wonder if my little Mary down here isn't glad."

CHAPTER VIII.

THERE was a fire at M——; in a night of stinging cold; for winter had come. It originated in Mrs. Phillips' house; and already, when it was first seen, had made such headway, that little could be done. Captain Brooks and Doria—his wife she was now—were away; were in New York where "the Sontag" was singing, where the Crystal Palace was building, and where so much went on. Mrs. Phillips could tell them—could tell Ambrose, for he was on the spot, seeing to her, seeing to everything—where the silver was, in what closet, and where money and valuable papers were. He went with another, a fireman, through the smoke and darkness, and brought them.

"Mary—I don't understand why we don't see Irish Mary," said Mrs. Phillips, with alarm gathering in her features.

Ambrose started from her and went with strained eyes through the crowd, searching and questioning. Then he was out of sight within the house where the flames darted and the smoke rolled.

"Oh, God!" prayed Mrs. Phillips, wringing her hands, giving up her basket of silver filled with silver, into the nearest hands. Into whose hands she neither knew nor cared. All the silver in the world was as dross to her in that terrible moment.

But he came out safely, as it seemed, with Irish Mary; bearing her in his arms as if she were dead. He took her into Mr. Walton's, whose house, although near, was safe because of brick, and because the sturdy firemen had determined to do their best with it.

Mary was soon restored. She had become insensible from terror and suffocation. And then it was seen that Ambrose was sitting ghastly pale and with his white handkerchief filled with blood.

Little Mary Walton, when she heard the exclamations, left Irish Mary and Mrs. Phillips and came with rushing affright, with a face as pale as Ambrose's. She sank down at his feet like a reed that is broken, clinging to his hand and weeping. (On her birthday, that was not far off, she was to be made his wife.) Others

came, pale and in tears; his poor mother and little Nan among the rest.

Dr. Wethergreen came. He came after that, several times in a day. Other physicians, physicians of experience and note came, and did their best for the suffering, the patient, the so widely, so dearly beloved. Prayers and love united themselves with skill to hold him back, "For his mother's sake; for poor little Mary's sake," people said, with tears streaming. "For my sake, blessed Lord Jesus!" Irish Mary said, lying awake to hold her beads, to say her prayers and weep; to wish out of the depths of her soul, that she could save him by her own death, by her own suffering here or hereafter. She would not care *what* came to her if he could be saved to his mother and his darl'n.

But he died on an early spring day when all the world was waking to renewed life, and the hammers and saws of the workmen were heard on the new house. He died in a blessed way; as the heroic, the self-forgetting martyr dies, with heaven in his eye and on his tongue.

So that his mother, little Mary and all were carried above their sorrow. They felt the world where love goes on, ever on, with its ties in no fear of being broken, very near to them, in that one so soon to enter there, spoke to them of its delights. They could sing with him the simple words that everybody knows, that, sang with him, had such thrilling significance—

"He delivered me when bound,
And when bleeding, healed my wound;
Sought me wand'ring, set me right,
Turned my darkness into light."

He sang with a feeble voice, so that he could hardly be heard unless little Mary and Doria sang very softly; and his cheek lay on his hand like a babies; but a smile was about his lips, and they all saw that his face shone, as it were, "like the face of an angel."

It shone when he died. He died with a smile on his lips, murmuring,

"Sought me wand'ring—set me right—
Turned my darkness into light."

CHAPTER IX.

In a lonely part of that lovely place of the dead, "The Valley," close by where the brook ripples and the hare-bells blossom in their time, sleeps the active brain; are folded the active hands. Little Mary Walton goes often with Doria, or Caddy, or some other who mourns for him tenderly, carrying a flower that she loves, that she has kissed, and on which her tears have fallen, to leave it there, when she comes away,

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in the soft grass above his head. She smiles at the same time that she weeps; for she says, "His life and his death were so—so sublime, as it seems to me! and then, you see, it makes me so thankful to know that he loved me as he did!"

His poor mother never goes there. The reason that she gives is that "she don't feel really able to go; that she don't feel so strong as she did a year ago." She says it with quivering muscles; sometimes even shaken with cold, in the midst of the summer heat. For the rest, she keeps herself very active about her house, seeing to Dr. Joseph's comfort as if he were her son, to Caddy's as if she were her daughter; keeping the lively Juliet Wethergreen (the doctor's ten-year-old sister) there that little Nan's life may not be lonely; caring little for herself if she may be kept from murmuring, if she may follow the example of her blessed son in doing good, and at last be with him in the land where will be no more partings, no more death.

Irish Mary, Mary McGavin now, runs in often to see her. She told her one day, weeping as if she would lose her reason, that she prayed half of her time that the Lord Jesus would forgive her for being the cause (the *innocent* cause she was, as the Lord Jesus knew,) of the death of him as was so much fitter to live than she, poor Irish Mary. Mrs. Ambrose soothed and comforted her, that time. And, from that time, Irish Mary mentioned Ambrose no more; but kept as far as possible from everything that could bring him to her own mind, or to his mother's. She had tears in her eyes often; but she said and did the liveliest, most humorous things, so that no one of all who came essaying one and another means of consolation, left Mrs. Ambrose so tranquilized as did Irish Mary.

When Mrs. Phillips and her son-in-law, the architect, would build a new house on the site of the old, people looked "for something handsome," as they said; for gable windows and bay windows, and trellises and balconies, since it was known there at M—— that Captain Brooks had a hand in planning the charming little Grecian, Italian and Swiss villas, that, in the last six months, had been coming in among the plain, white dwellings, like beautiful gems, as it were, in the midst of the hard granite. But, partly on account of the perfect convenience of the internal construction, partly on account of the family love for the old, familiar rooms, the new house was made large and high, and in all respects like the old; only, without, it was of brick; and it had more delicate sashes, purer glass; had an iron yard, based upon granite, in place of the old white paling.

They were all pleased with the house; but solemn thoughts were mingled with the liking; for they did not forget Ambrose; hardly for an hour did they forget him. It seemed to them, Doria and her husband said to each other, that, in a peculiar way, his mantle had fallen on all in that house; that, in a peculiar way, it was required of them to keep themselves pure and to do good "while the day lasted."

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DR. WETHERGREEN'S PRACTICE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SUSY L——'S DIARY."

CHAPTER I.

"BIRDY, thou darling!" He, that is, young Dr. Joseph Wethergreen, held the stranger-bird in both hands to his cheek. "And how didst know, darling birdy—what put it into thy little head—that my heart was aching for some live thing?"

He held the bird off a little from him now, looking steadily into her eyes, as he talked to her. "You knew where to come, didn't you, darling?—darling!"

The bird, a pretty Canary, had just flown, first to the young doctor's window-sill; and, then, upon his calling her tenderly and holding out his hand to her, holding it a little nearer, and a little nearer, she came and lit upon his fore-finger and clung to it. Soon as he talked to her, with his face near her; with his eyes on hers, telling her things and asking her questions; she began tipping her head one way and another, as if she were pleasantly coquetting; she picking at the ring he wore on his little finger, picked at it so smartly, so pertinaciously, twisting the plate—underneath which the tinniest lock of very light hair lay curling—or twisting her bill, rather, in trying to twist the plate, and almost coming off her feet, in tugging and twisting, that the young doctor laughed aloud and merrily, calling her "a jealous thing!"

But he told her to "never mind; 'twas all over now. Anna Rogers was now nothing to him, or he to Anna Rogers. Because he was poor, birdy. Did birdy know what that meant, being poor?"

Birdy made a lively, chirping sound, as if she meant—"Yes; yes, she had heard about it; but didn't mind it."

"Well," the young doctor told her, "he was poor. Poorer than the mice that came by night, and sometimes by day—for it was very still there in his room most of the time," he told birdy—"to his closet, which birdy saw there; and that found, when there was neither crust nor bone, the backs of his books to gnaw. And Anna Rogers was rich. Richer than any Jewess, didn't you know it, birdy?" with his eyes steadily on the bird's, stroking her feathers and speaking cheerfully.

It was a year, just a year that day—and he

repeated the thought after it came to him, aloud to birdy; it was just a year that day since old Dr. Rogers, of Roxbury, Dean of the J—— street Medical College in Boston, where he (Joseph Wethergreen, that is) was in a few more days to graduate, told him that Anna was rich.

"Why, young man," spitting the words out of his mouth, as he walked the floor with his head turned a little toward the pale candidate; "she's more money, or will have when I have done with it, than any girl in Roxbury! She could marry the president or any of the faculty to-morrow, if they hadn't wives already! That she could, sir; she's—a—match—for—any—man."

He drew the last words out with slow sententiousness; managing in that way, and in the sneering tones and features, to express a quantity of the loftiest contempt ever yet visited upon the head of any gentlemanly, scholarly candidate whatever. The young doctor went through the reminiscence half to himself, half aloud to the bird, adding with a cheerful face and voice—"Didn't he, birdy?"

Birdy chirped, and, in an airy way, lifted her wings a little, evidently meaning "Yes, but then don't mind him. He's a stupid thing. He thinks gold made him; but it didn't, did it? Maybe he'll know better some day. If he don't, more's the pity for him. But never mind him. Never mind his rich daughter. I'll pick and twist her ring some more, gold and all."

She tugged at the ring again, and almost went tail over head, pulling and twisting. Then she stood upright, wiping her bill clear of the whole matter and seeing to her feathers.

Now, it was true—Dr. Joseph told birdy it was—that, in the year that had dragged itself along, some way, he hardly knew how, since old Dr. Rogers explained to him how rich Anna was, how she could marry any one, and so was not for him, he had not once before that evening spoken Anna's name nor heard it spoken. He had crossed over to the other side of the street and then turned back home, not more than two weeks ago, either, one day when he was on his way to the baker's for his loaf, because he saw young Murdock, son of Professor Murdock, of J—— street college, before him; that he need not meet him and hear him say in his vaulting way, "You!

Wethergreen! you remember Anna Rogers! of course you do! of course you have reason! She's going to be married, old boy!"

"Eh?" said birdy, tipping her head, and with a voice that the young doctor already loved.

"Yes, birdy," he said; and his busy thoughts, some of which he spoke aloud to birdy, went back and forth, between the past and the present. He was on his way after his loaf, he repeated to birdy, two slices of which loaf, together with the bowl of coffee that his landlady's little daughter regularly brought in to him, morning and evening, was to constitute his supper. He turned, and let his loaf go, when he saw young Murdock on the pavement before him. He hurried back to his room, (the room where they were then, he told birdy, seeing that she tipped her head and looked into his face; the room which was at once office, dining-room and dormitory.) He turned the key of his door, that young Murdock might not, by any chance, come to him there, to quiz him about this business, and to ask him with fixed gaze, what he would give to see Anna Rogers.

"But now," once more speaking aloud, "let him come. With birdy on my finger, I can be the first to cry—'Do you know how Anna Rogers is?—my old flame, you know? Is she married, I wonder?'"

He did not know whether she was married. He had carefully kept his eyes away from the marriage lists of all the papers. While he was thinking about this, he turned the evening paper over—he was reading it when birdy came in; he looked over the marriages; and by a curious coincidence saw this—"On Wednesday, A. M., August 28th, at the summer residence of the bride's father, Anna Matilda Rogers, only child of Professor Rogers, M. D., Dean of J— street Medical College, to Charles James Murdock, only son of Dr. Murdock, Professor of Materia Medica of the same Institution. The bridal pair, with the father of the bride, sailed the same day, we understand, for Europe. Success go with them."

"Yes; the same young Murdock I was telling you about, just now, birdy. He I came across when I was going after my loaf. I went without my supper on his account, birdy."

"Eh?" whispered the bird, as if she were thinking "that's queer! that's a queer thing for you to do."

"Yes, birdy; queer, wasn't it? And his head isn't bigger than that," showing birdy his loosely closed hand. "His brains are all lead; only there is a little chaff somewhere in the packing. Sometimes that flies a little; and then he's a little

lively, birdy; in a way though as if his head were dizzy."

Birdy chirped gaily; and even warbled a little.

"Where did you come from, birdy?" setting his hand up before his face, to talk in a regular way to the bird.

"Eh?" said birdy, as if she did not understand.

"Where did you come from, darling? where is your old home?"

"Eh?" she said again, stepping gaily along his finger, with a manner as if she meant "I shan't tell you."

And then she warbled a full, prolonged strain, with her pretty head lifted, and her delicate throat fluttering.

"You beauty!—you shall have some supper, that you shall. Sit here by me on the table; there, that's a pretty one. Sit here, and we will look our money over to see how much we've got between us. Then we shall know what we can do."

He opened his pocket-book—a huge one, given to him by his good old grandfather the day he left home to come and settle at M—. A huge pocket-book it was, an old one; he remembered seeing it when he was a boy, well rounded out with bank notes in part, but mostly with notes of demand, in his grandfather's hands. He used to come up close, in those days, and stand on tip-toe, that he might know better what was in it. Now, in those days, he looked into it sitting quite at his ease. There was nothing to hinder him. There was almost always a little "change" in one department; in the others were sometimes scraps of memoranda, and the like; but never anything any better. So that gradually the habit had come upon him of beginning at once to whistle softly or hum softly, and in rather a sad way—"The harp that once in Tara Halls"—whenever he took the huge, dark, empty thing into his hands.

"See, birdy!" he said, now showing the little one that stood there before him, watching him, how large and empty it was, and how many apartments it had; "see! I call it Tara's Hall; and my heart grows quite sick sometimes, what with the empty pocket-book—when I've been here so long, toying, birdy—and with the harp of the song hanging as mute on Tara's walls, as if the soul of music and of everything beautiful and hopeful were dead, birdy. Isn't it too bad?"

"Eh?" settling her wings. "Eh?" It was a lively sound, albeit, very touching. It had comfort in it some way for the young doctor, who began now with brightened face to pick out the bits of money, making up their amount aloud to birdy.

"Yes, you know what to say to one, beauty! Twenty-five cents, birdy, for pulling the Irishman's snag of a tooth. Old Dr. Gravesend sent him round—because he thought the poor rascal could have no money to pay, birdy; that's why old Dr. Gravesend sent him. Twenty-eight, thirty-seven, sixty-two; sixty-two cents. That's all. That's every cent you and I have got in the world, birdy."

"Eh?" chirped the bird, with an air so unconcerned that it did the young doctor good to see it.

"Yes, birdy; every cent," exchanging his dressing-gown for a coat. "Take good care of things, birdy; I'm going out."

"Eh," meaning "yes," this time. The young doctor knew it by her looks. He had closed the window upon birdy's entrance. He looked round now to see if all was right; tried the fire-board, whether it had any little openings chimney-ward, nodded his head, said "Good-bye" to birdy, and was gone; gone with springing steps, to buy a loaf for himself, some seed and a drinking cup for birdy, together with a half dozen candles for both himself and birdy.

Birdy didn't care about them, though, contented little thing! On the contrary, when Dr. Joseph returned, she was in a corner of the room behind a folio, with her head tucked close under her wing; tucked so close that he could hardly believe she had any head, and fell to asking her about it, and to telling her that he wanted to see her eyes once more; and that, especially, he wanted to know, for a certainty, whether she had any head.

Birdy wouldn't wake. Perhaps she waked far enough to think to herself in her contented way, "No use in it. It's bed-time; I'll attend to him, with all my heart, in the morning." Dr. Joseph felt as if she had some such thought when she nestled a little at his speaking to her, only to tuck her head farther, and shut her wings closer than they were shut before.

So he laid the paper of seed on a book-shelf, cleared the books and manuscript away from one side of his table, and putting the bell down close to the floor, rang for his coffee. When it came, he sat with his eyes on the corner where birdy nestled—fast asleep by this time, he had no doubt—and made his simple meal in peace.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Dr. Joseph first came to Manchester, he wrote often to "the old folks at home," letters filled with hope and courage, and cheery messages for the old and the young. Of late he had

put it over, whenever he could, as a burden that oppressed him, if he took it up. And when he did write, he had little to say of the present, much of "by-and-bye." By-and-bye it would be so and so; by-and-bye thus and thus; and then!—

For he had felt cheerless and worn, nearly all of the time of late; cheerless, with no heavy sorrow near him, or pending; worn, with no work for his hands or his feet to do; both cheerless and worn of waiting—waiting—through the long morning, through the heavy noon-day, through the slow gathering twilight and the evening; waiting while fever tossed its restless arms in many chambers near; so near that he could see the lights shining through the nights, night after night; and while cholera infantum and the whole troop of summer complaints for children, sent their low murmurs or their sharp cries through the open windows, by day and by night; while the hearse went back and forth, back and forth; and, beyond this, while old Dr. Gravesend and Dr. Coffin, his neighbors both of them, had so much to do that they flew one way and another; that they pulled off their *robes de chambre* in the halls, in the doors, sometimes; threw them to their wives, receiving from them their coats instead, to put on while they were on the way to their carriages; and hurried in entering their carriages and in leaving them, so that, whew! they hardly knew their heads from their feet; hardly knew whether they gave their patients camphor or nux vomica, ipecac or arsenic. They had more than they could do. They said so, whenever there was a chance, in the pale, young doctor's hearing. It did them so much good to say it in *his* hearing! to let *him* see the hurry they kept up! They laughed more, said more jocular things, all day, thinking of it; thinking how he would go to his still room and sit and think of it, growing paler and sadder, as he thought.

And he did go back and think of it, and brood over it; and, in that time, he was the paler and the sadder for it. Then he cast it off from him; and was, as it were, inspired by it. He laid hold of his books and said, with the color coming back to his face and the light to his eyes—"I'll work! By-and-bye, by-and-bye, they will see! They will be old men, by-and-bye; and in need that the young should wait for them and stay their steps. They'll come to this while I am yet in my prime, God blessing me; and then I'll wait for them; I'll attend to them; I'll do all I can for them, so help me God! If He will help me, no man old and past his work, or young and looking in vain for his work, shall feel that I make it the

worse for him. Now I can wait, I thank them! and study, I thank them! and make ready for any time."

The next morning after birdy came to live with him, after he and birdy had taken their breakfast—at the same time and the same table—he sat cheerfully down to answer letters from home, and letters from his cousin, Nathan Ambrose; once, his idlest of all school and playmates, now one of the "fast" men of California. He took the letters to which he would reply, out of his drawer, and read the one from home to himself with thoughtful features. Horace's he read aloud to birdy, birdy chirping and warbling all the time.

"I'm on the high road to fortune, if you know where that is," wrote Ambrose. "I make money, now that I have so much to work with, and experience, about as fast as I have a mind to. But it is often, in a deuce of a way. You'd come to your feet, if you knew how, white-faced, slender things as you are, you'd come to your feet, (as I've seen you more than once in my day, when I was bullying poor, little, patched-up, snub-nosed Horace Grennell, who never had a handkerchief of his own to wipe the tears he was always letting fall, and—*par parenthesis sub parenthesis*—if I use my French or Latin, whichever it is, right; I picked it up, you know, and it wasn't labeled—I wonder where poor Horace is now;) you'd go straight to the place where you keep my letters, and the lumps of gold and quartz I sent you and you'd bring them on, looking mighty sober and sorry. You'd burn the letters, watching them still with sober eyes until their ashes disappeared. You'd throw the lumps of quartz and gold in next—taking care to handle the lumps by the quartz; taking care not to touch the gold, lest it should defile you too. Then, while you watched them, you'd fall to ruminating; to settling it in your mind whether gold is an unmitigated blessing or an unmitigated curse; coming at last to the conclusion, perhaps, that it is not an unmitigated anything, that it is to yourself, to me, to all its possessors, pretty much what you, I and the rest of its possessors, make it. Then you'd say, 'Heigho'—with a long breath, one-half of which had better been left in your lungs, or stomach, or somewhere there, for your pleasure and health's sake. Still I tell you it isn't so bad. Isn't so bad, I mean, making money as I do. Everybody does it here; church members and all. So here goes!

"Nan says in her letters that she knows you don't get along, although you never say a word. She says you wait and wait for patients to come ringing at your door. *Eccc*, then! (Don't *ecce*

mean *behold*? I guess it does.) Well, I'm going to run over home, one of these days. I want to see you and mother and Nan. I want to prop your affairs and mother's and Nan's up a little with some gilded pillars. Don't now, Jo, stand yourself up straight in the middle of your room, in the old way that I remember so well, lock your hands and arms together in the old way, and say—'No; nobody shall come near to see to my affairs or to prop them. I alone will see to my affairs, and so manage them, that, at last they shall stand and thrive without propping.' Because you see this would be foolish under the circumstances. *Au revoir*, NAT."

"*Post Scriptum*.—Jol keep yourself in wrestling condition. I'm a mightier fellow, altogether, than I was when you saw the last of me; so that Hugh McReid never says—'Mr. Ambrose faced them down,' but—'Mr. Ambrose turned his entire broadside upon 'em, jist 'ithout spaking at all, at all; and they succumbed, that they did, they did!' My face used to be as round as the moon in her full, you know. Now it is as large, it is, I swear! And you never saw hands like these of mine. I could establish you nicely, here on the back of my left hand; you and mother and little Nan. Perhaps I will when I come. Good-bye."

"Half good, isn't he, birdy?" said the young doctor, dipping his pen in the ink. But birdy did not say a word.

He wrote a short, lively letter to his cousin, in conclusion, telling him to be careful in his money-making, about this one thing—never, in any of the days or the hours of his life, to say a single word, or do a single act, to which, in the last of his life here, he must look back as to a blot, a stain upon his life, upon his soul. Would he think of that?

To his family he wrote first about his wife, meaning birdy. As for his business, why people didn't know yet, hadn't found it out yet that he was there close by them, with knowledge, skill and good-will enough in him, to set them all on their feet and keep them going. But never mind! by-and-bye they would understand. He sent word to grandfather that "the chiefs and ladies bright" hadn't come back, as yet, to Tara's halls; but never mind; they would come by-and-bye. Humorous messages he sent to the children; humorous as could well be, they surely were. But the parents, the eighteen-years-old Belinda, the fifteen-years-old John, and the ten-years-old Juliet had tears over them when the letter came, at the same time that they had laughter; had pity, insomuch that it amounted to heartache, at the same time that they had

hope and courage in the cheery "by-and-bye—by-and-bye." The little ones, Jerome and Hetty, laughed and danced for the funny, dear things that brother Joseph said to them; yet they stood still a little now and then, to be *sure* that their elders were really glad and not sorry; that they did really laugh and not cry.

CHAPTER III.

"My child—his name is Willy; Willy Harvey;" the mother was taking off the little fellow's cap. The little fellow looked ingenuously up into Dr. Joseph's face; and, when Dr. Joseph said, "How do you do, Master Willy?" he answered, still looking into his face—"I ain't very well, thank you. I've got a sore finger;" raising a little the hand that he carried in a sling.

"And he would come to you, Dr. Wethergreen. From our windows," pointing to a large house, which was near, although not on the same street, "he has looked over here to your's to see you and your bird sitting together. He has watched you hours since his finger has been sore, poor fellow! He seems to feel quite acquainted with you." She laughed, as if she thought Willy rather a queer little fellow for this; but the boy kept his honest face. It was clear that he had not the remotest consciousness of its being queer, or anything, but perfectly natural and consistent.

It was a felon, or a run-round, or something of the sort. Mrs. Harvey hardly knew what. She only knew that it was a very painful thing; and that Willy had taken cold in it, or it had been mismanaged, or something. She could see that it grew worse. And for the last day or two, he had been unwilling that Dr. Gravesend should touch it, or look at it, when he came. "He is so rough, you see," interposed Willy. "He hurts me so!"

"You shall see how easy *I* can be," said Joseph, beginning to take off the bandages. He talked constantly to the boy, telling him little stories about what birdy would do; and birdy was close by stepping about, tipping her head and confirming it all by her vivacious "Eho?" and her prolonged warblings. So that the finger was dressed; and, so far was Willy from having suffered by the operation, that he was soothed and ready to sleep from the touch of the gentle fingers, the sound of the gentle voice.

"Why don't you have a bird-cage for your bird, Dr. Wethergreen?" asked Willy, as he was standing with his cap in his hand ready to go.

"Because I haven't money to spare to buy one, my boy."

"My mother has just let you have some money.

Now you can buy a cage, can't you? Oh! mother, I mean to bring ours over to him. Tom's dead, you know."

"If Dr. Wethergreen would like it, certainly."

Dr. Wethergreen would like it, and be very grateful to them for it, he told them; and then they bade him "good morning," Willy saying, the second time, when he was in the door, "I shall come in and see you again, Dr. Wethergreen."

"Certainly, my boy. Good-bye."

Does anybody know of how much worth this one little incident was to our pale, young doctor? He blessed that boy, and had a warm, loving and thankful heart all day. And the next day; for the next day they came again, and a servant bringing the cage. They came for many days in close succession; for the little fellow had a hard time of it. When it was raining, or likely to rain; sometimes when it was not raining, or likely to rain, they sent for Dr. Joseph to come to them, and kept him to dinner, if they could by a little persuasion; if they could not, kept him awhile to chat with them and see the pictures and the garden. Mr. Harvey came round, more than once, with Willy in the carriage, and called to invite him to ride out on some of the pleasant country roads with them. These attentions were continued after the boy was so far recovered as to be in no need whatever of Dr. Joseph's medical services. He still came, where, as yet so few came, (and none other with face and breeding like his) showing his honest, blessed face, taking hold of the doctor's finger leading him off over to their house to dine, or to take his supper with them, or to see what papa had been bringing, or mamma making; or to walk in the garden to eat plums and peaches, and to see how his beans were growing. One day he came in bringing a beautiful little vase of porcelain, inscribed with gilt letters, "To my Friend;" he had just been to Affutt's crockery store alone, to buy it, he said. And, after that, scarcely a day passed that the little feet didn't come pattering up the stairs and along the passage, that the young voice, rich with welling love and gladness, did not call out, even before the chamber door was gained, sometimes, "I'm coming, Dr. Wethergreen. I've got something for you! some beautiful flowers; see!"

Does any one know, can any one think how great was the worth of this little boy to the pale, worn, anxious man? how great it is in the memory of it now, after so many years have passed? how great it will be while he lives, and when he lies looking over the varied past, waiting his summons? Can any one think? There have

been others, it may be, with like needs, who have met like ministries. If there have been any such, they know.

CHAPTER IV.

DR. JOSEPH was a very elegant man, with pleasant eyes, and a pleasant voice; with a fine form, of middling height, and easy, noble manners. To those then who just saw him here and there, who knew only this of him, that he went and came with buoyant steps, he had the undoubted air of a man thoroughly endowed, in all respects. And this makes us think how it was with a poor architect, who had his dwelling near, and who called up one day when he was on his way to his work, to ask the doctor to go in and see his sick child. He didn't suppose anything could be done for the child now, he said; or, indeed that there had been any chance from the beginning. But, of late, the doctor—Dr. Gravesend he had been having—had given the child up; as he sometimes thought, because he supposed there would be little, or no pay coming, and because he had business as much as he wanted, that would be sure to pay. Would he go?

"Certainly!" Dr. Joseph said.

Ambrose had come "running over home," as he said he should do, and stood now in the doctor's room, with huge rings on three or four fingers, with a huge chain and huge key and seal and charms dangling, and a huge shirt-pin of rough gold, mounted in gold elaborately wrought. Always, from a boy, at play when he was not at work, now he tossed a half dozen twenty-dollar pieces in his wide hand. He stopped tossing them, however, when the architect, with a look as if he half doubted his right to medical services, and even to a standing and breathing place on the earth, asked Dr. Joseph whether he would go to see his child. He Ambrose, that is, looked steadily at the doctor, holding his breath to see what he would do. When he replied, with an expression as if he wondered that the architect should doubt it, and with a voice of such genuine kindness, Ambrose breathed again, a long breath, and said—"I guess he will go, sir! If he refused, I'd toss 'im along head over heels, heels over head, all the way. I would, sir!" seeing that the architect smiled.

The architect gave Dr. Joseph directions at the door; and there they parted. The doctor, accompanied by Ambrose, went to see if any thing could be done for the sick child, the architect went another way to his work, with a hod for bricks upon his shoulder, and cumbered with

trowels and other implements of the mason's trade. For now, in this time of great need, he could no more depend upon his beautiful art, for which there was but slow requisition as yet at M——. He must go here and there with the carpenters and the masons, often with burdens heavy to be borne. This day his shoulders were bent beneath them. And his whole manhood too was bowed this day, for the child growing paler and more like wax every hour, for the eyes becoming larger and brighter, and for the dear voice which had more and more of the new, strange melody in it, as if very soon it would "go wavering away up to heaven," to be heard no more at the door when he came, nor at the board where they had their simple meals.

He turned to look after the two young men as they went on with firm, elastic steps. He had watched the doctor many times before, to see how firm his step was. This day he bent his head more and more, as he again went forward with his trowels and his hod. He said within himself—"There's a man, there are some men who can be happy; who have nothing in their way."

Yes, brother; even as thou canst, even as the most severely tried one can, if he calls home his trust from that which is without, from the friends or the riches that he has or desires, and bids it repose quietly in his own soul; if he does it, knowing and feeling in every nerve and fibre of his being, that there the great, the loving Father dwells *always*, if he would but know it, if he would but feel it; that He waits there always to take His child close to Him, to breathe into him the breath of His own exalted strength and serenity. So that, in the midst of the downfall of his dearest mortal comforts, he may still be blest; blest even beyond what that man can conceive who sits with his unbroken possessions all around him, keeping his eyes forever on them, his whole mind forever on them, trusting in them, believing in them, trusting and believing in nothing greater, nothing dearer. Only—only, he *must* have more of them; more riches, more friends; for, some how, of all that he has, not one thing can he take to himself close, keep it close, feeling his innermost life satisfied thereby. He must have one more treasure, one more friend. Oh, for one more! for the *right* one, that shall satisfy him, so that he may feel the mental hungering and thirsting no more forever.

Yes; he gets them. There they are, the treasure on his board, the friend on his heart. And because they are there, he says to himself, "This shall be enough. Nor shall I want and search no more."

But see whether it is enough. See whether the old longing, the old discontent does not soon again creep in upon him. And this is because he did not *first* render himself worthy of his gift of the earthly, by his greater love of the heavenly. Christ taught this same lesson, when He said—"Seek first the kingdom of heaven," meaning the the "kingdom that is not meat and drink, but the doing the will of the Father"—"and all these things shall be added unto you."

The philosophers teach it, when they say—"And thus does the poor child of eternity, going forth from his native home, and surrounded on all sides by his heavenly inheritance, which yet his trembling hand delays to grasp, wander with fugitive and uncertain steps throughout the waste; everywhere laboring to establish for himself a dwelling-place, yet happily ever reminded by the speedy downfall of each of his succeeding habitations, that he can find peace nowhere but in his Father's house."

We wonder, by the way, if any one of our young and lively readers have impatience because we tarry so long out of our legitimate business of story-telling. We would deplore this, gentle ones; because we would gladly help you to patience and pleasure at all times, and especially when we speak of this dearest, sublimest of all truths; this truth the least understood of all.

We are not always to sit here in the familiar places to write; nor are you to be here always in the familiar places to read. This we feel; and we would now and then say some of those things that it best befits us to say, best befits you to hear, as we and you go on toward our dying hour, toward the home that is beyond that hour. We would that all, we who write and you who read, might not so often have discontent, that we might not so habitually disregard the true riches, the true capacity and beauty within us, while we go searching for this and for that which lies beyond us; and that too with an avidity, which, of itself, demonstrates our unworthiness of success, our unfitness for its serene, Christ-like enjoyment. And we would too that the hodge-poles, and all the poor and troubled, may know that the *supreme* good is in readiness for them, the same as for others; that God dwelleth in them, the same as He dwelleth in others; and that treasures and friends, although they are indeed beautiful and dear accessories of the divine life, can never be pressed into our service as its substitutes.

The poor architect's child was dying when Dr. Joseph came; dying gently and with such wonderfully bright-looking eyes, that nurse was

saying to a neighbor as he went in—"She'll live to be a blessing to her poor father yet."

The child died at midnight, just as a fearful shower of lightning and dashing rain was clearing itself away from the face of the moon. She was the last of his household. The wife Jane, the child Jane both slept now; still, as he looked upon the bright spot in the sky where the black clouds were parting and taking their rim of silver radiance, it was to him as if the faces of his beloved and of the Redeemer who kept them, who was so much to him now in his time of "thick darkness," looked peacefully, benignly forth; as if they beckoned him and said—"Come: come and drink of the full fountains that satisfy. Then thou shalt have peace and strength for thy earthly work. Then shalt thou be with us still, and we will be with thee, while thou art on the earth and when thou comest hither."

He wept still, now and then, when he looked upon the stiff form and thought of all that it had been to him in his home. But he had no more bitterness or envying discontent. He loved Dr. Joseph at once, as if he were his brother; and gave him his hand, when he saw a tear fall from his eye upon the beautiful face of the dead.

Dr. Joseph himself took a lesson there of death, and of the manly resignation of the stricken father. The tear that fell was one, in part of sympathy with sorrow, in part of humility over his own life of inward repining for that which was denied, of thankless indifference for that which was given. Ambrose, who also was there to be of what service he might on the occasion, wept gushing, streaming tears, like a child; and said, more than once with his eyes on the still face—"Too bad, I swear."

"Humph!" said he, on the way with Joseph to his room—"I hated my gold, when I was there. I pulled off my rings—hateful things, I've been such a fool with 'em, you see; and tucked them into my pocket, here," striking his broad palm hard upon a side pocket; "and tucked my ox-chain and harrow and plough in out of sight; in where I shouldn't be put in mind of them, and of my miserable nonsense in wearing them, by touching them accidentally with my hand. It's done me good, you see, being there and seeing that child die. That's something I shan't forget in one day. You see, I had been thinking all along before, that, somehow my gold didn't make me any more of a man than I was before I got it. When I was there in that room I thought I understood why. I thought that perhaps God had never meant that we *should* be improved, or satisfied with anything that we can't take on with us as a sort of welcome, or preparation, or some-

thing of that sort; as a sort of shining crown, you see, for the head and a clean robe for the body, when we go where that little child has gone to-night."

The next day he went to a jeweler's with his "lot of trumpery," as he called it, when he laid it before the jeweler's eyes. He sold all but the watch that had been his father's—he would half-starve before he would sell that, he told the jeweler—and a ring for his little finger, of plain gold. "Made out of a bit of ore that a poor fellow gave me when he was dying, off there;" tossing his hand westward. "He thought I'd done him some good, poor fellow!" with his eyes on the ring. "He wanted to do something for me, you see," lifting his head now and vigorously wiping his nose—"and so he gave me this, out of his vest pocket. All you've got here, sir," running his eyes over the glittering array, "wouldn't buy this little ring; nor *begin* to."

There it was. Love blessed that ring to his soul, so that it was really and truly "added unto him;" really made a blessing and a treasure, for

this life and for the life to come. And the watch that was his father's, Love, the heaven-born, blessed that too. The rest were gew-gaws hanging about him, making him conscious at all times of self, of his outward self; and than this, there can be nothing without the range of the positive vices, more adverse to genuine nobleness of spirit, to genuine manliness and grace of deportment.

He purchased a black guard for his watch and put it on, with the old watch and the old key hanging by it. He bought back the pin, after he had once made it over to the jeweler, twisted it up close in a bit of soft paper, and put it into his pocket with his watch. The rest he had in gold—so much. And just so much as he received, he sent in that afternoon, by express, to the architect. He gave no name, nor date, nor locality. He merely wrote in an old-fashioned, irregular hand, very unlike his true, smooth, dashing style—"For value received I send you this. Use it as you would if it were express payment for one of your designs. YOUR FRIEND."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

DR. WETHERGREEN'S PRACTICE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SUSY L—'S DIARY."

CONCLUDED FROM PAGE 101.

CHAPTER IX.

Mrs. HOLMES, in a few weeks, could use her left arm nearly as well as her right; and this was the marvel of all who knew her, insomuch that old Mrs. Townsend, who had been "hauled up," as she had it, for twenty years with the same complaint, and a half-dozen others, or more, men and women, with unwieldy chronic maladies—such as neuralgia, *tic dolozeux*, gout, dyspepsia, and asthma—came and said they *must* be healed, if it was any way in his power; they had been sick so long; they had suffered so much; they were so tired of it! Drs. Gravesend and Coffin laughed, when they heard what cases came to him; laughed obstreperously when they heard that all the poor Irish were flocking to him in that sickly time, because McCormick had told them how he, "Doctor-r-r Wethergreen, himself, had raised his son up from the dead intirely, a'most."

Dr. Joseph heard that they laughed; but he let it pass. And, quietly going his way, he healed many, so that more and more business came into his hands, until he, too, had as much as he could do. Chiefly among the poor, however; for the poor all over his quarter of the city, had got it into their heads how kind and attentive he was; how he had been heard to say that he *hoped* he would try as hard for McCormick's boy, as he would if he were the President's boy; that, if he would not, he was no follower of the Saviour, certainly. There were other physicians there at M——, they thanked God! who would say the same; who would do the same. Large numbers went to them; and still there were large numbers left for Dr. Wethergreen. And they liked to go to him; to do the little that they could for him, because he was poor, like them; because, like them, he was having a tough struggle in the great world.

At one poor room, that, for a long time he visited daily, he found often some new comfort that had crept in and taken its place while he was away. Glasses for the medicines came, and little plates to cover them close; silver spoons, fresh covers of the whitest linen on the stand

where the dishes were kept; fresh napkins to be used about the bed; fresh bed-clothes, finer than any that belonged in that house, marked "C. Phillips," in delicate characters; and good dishes for the family table came, as Dr. Joseph knew; for dishes of beautiful ware were often there on the shelves and on the table, side by side with the burned and battered dishes.

When the child became better, so that she could again hold her playthings in her hand, Dr. Joseph found her amusing herself one day with a tiny willow basket, filled with artificial flowers.

"See!" said the child, turning up her pale, sick face. "Doria give it to me. Doria Phillips." The little fluttering hands put it out toward the doctor, and left it there on the edge of the bed for him to see it. "Doria give it to me," repeated the child. "She's a good Doria."

"Who is she? who is Doria, little one?"

"She's Doria Phillips. She *comes* here; she and Caddy. Caddy's good too; didn't you know it?" again lifting the large eyes.

"No, I didn't know it, Roxy. Who are they?" he added, addressing the mother.

"Why," began she, hesitating and preparing her words; "They're the ones that have been coming here all along. You've seen how comfortable things have been here?"

"Yes."

"Well, its all their doing. I hadn't ought to say anything about it," she added, after a pause. "I've wanted to tell you, a hundred times," with filling eyes. "But they—or Doria, at least, told me not to. She told me that if I lisped a word of it, she should be offended with me. So I mustn't. I might tell about Caddy; for *she* don't care. She don't seem to think or care whether anybody knows it, or not. But Doria told me not to mention either of 'em to you. She said she had her reasons. I don't know what they are, I'm sure."

"No;" interposed Dr. Joseph, giving the basket back to the child. "But you do perfectly right to respect them, whatever they are."

Then he gave directions and went.

Now, it had been so all along, that Dr. Joseph visited little Roxy last on his round; so that he

was always there about noon. But, in the course of a few days after this, two or three of his patients were off his hands, and he was round to Mrs. Mercer's by a little past eleven. And he found Doria and Cad both there; Doria standing with her bonnet in her hand, talking with Mrs. Mercer; Cad sitting by the bed, with her hands where Roxy could see what they were doing, cutting out rows of paper-girls and boys. Well, when he came in, Doria, smiling a little, blushing a little, bowed herself a little in passing out by him, and was gone. He only saw of her, that she had what people call "a homely but very intelligent face;" that her features were what people call "large and irregular," but that there was something fine about them, after all; something exceedingly delicate and fair, from the clear white skin, and the blue veins showing themselves through. And in part, perhaps, from the light drab dress she wore, and the very light rose-colored ribbon about her throat. Cad, laughing in a low, musical way, to see Doria run, comely kept her place; and was introduced in form, as "Miss Phillips—Caroline Phillips," to Dr. Joseph.

"What made Doria run so?" asked Roxy, laughing, and with her eyes on the doorway where she disappeared. The child laughed on and on, as if the slight frame would be shaken to pieces. "She couldn't help it," she said, when they remonstrated. "Doria run so;" and then she laughed on.

"What *did* make Doria run so, Miss Phillips?" asked Dr. Joseph, smiling.

"She is shy," Cad said. "She is afraid that ——" indeed, Cad couldn't tell him. She would ask Doria what made her run so, when she went home. And Dr. Joseph's last words to her, as he stood with his hat, ready to go, was, "Don't forget to ask Doria what made her run so, Miss Phillips. You won't?"

"No, I won't;" with the musical laugh, and bowing her adieus.

The next morning, it happened that he came up with the Misses Phillips, on his way to the post-office. They, also, were going to the post-office; and so he had their company.

"What made you run, Doria?" he asked, laughing, almost as soon as he was introduced. For he knew by the liveliness in the eyes of both the sisters, what was in their thoughts.

"Because," she began, with something half-merry, half-defiant in her air.

"Because——"

"Yes; I can't tell you to-day."

"Will you tell me any day?"

"Perhaps I will. I don't know."

"What act shall I render, of penance or of service, to make sure of your telling me, some day?"

"You must just go your way, and not mind me any more than you would if I were a leaf on the wind."

By-the-by, the reader does not know that October had come at M——; that, already, at M——, some of the leaves were sere on the trees, and some of them falling. Did the reader think of this? A leaf went by them as they walked. It was this that suggested Doria's comparison.

"I shall mind the leaves that go by, then, not a little after this," replied he, laughing. "Now, I shall cross over to Miss Caroline's side. I shall ask Miss Caroline if she don't think this one of the pleasantest of days.

Miss Caroline did. Miss Caroline was glad the hot summer was over; glad that the autumn days had come, when poor, old fading Nature takes so grand an aspect; when the winds go by with so grand a sound. She was glad winter was not far off.

So did Dr. Joseph like the autumn. So did he look forward to the winter. But autumn was certainly not the time for any great exhilliration. It was, after all, a sort of burial time. It could be, as he thought, a rich, grand, good time, only to those whose clear faith in resurrections of all sorts, helped them to perceive a sublimity in all the processes, both slow and quick, through which a beautiful new life comes, in its time.

Miss Caroline thought the same; and her beautiful eyes had a softer expression, her voice a sweeter ripple, as she assented. As for Miss Doria, she was over there on the other side of Miss Caroline, walking demurely, and not once raising her eyes, not once speaking—only to say "Yes," once, when Cad asked her if she didn't think it true, that which Dr. Wethergreen had just said.

CHAPTER X.

"SAY, Doria! good Doria! what made you run? What makes you to this day, so stiff with me (only now and then, when, for a moment you forget what you are doing?) What is it? You shall tell me now, or I will be angry and stay away, until tomorrow evening, I p̄esume." He smiled a little; but he was earnest and grave, withal.

November had come! Thanksgiving was close by. He had been out and in of late; as if he were the brother of the daughters, the son of the mother, who was early widowed, and who had no son. He had met Caroline Cunningham

there, one time and heard her say, "You! I'm so provoked, I don't know what to do! Mrs. Jones, the dumpiest, dowdiest woman in all M——, you know, has got her a dress just like my new one; exactly. And has it trimmed like mine; in a peculiar way, you know. I had mine trimmed so, that there needn't be another like it. I'm mad! They say, that, whenever any one admires it, or looks at it, she tells them it is just exactly like Caroline Cunningham's. Caroline Cunningham has got a dress just like it. Ain't it too bad?"

To this and a good deal more like it, he had seen that Doria just listened with her accustomed quiet and good nature; that Cad only laughed, and, as she looked over her worsted, said, "Ah, I wouldn't care if I were you."

"Will you tell me?" he repeated. He had been waiting for Doria to tell him why she had been so shy and reserved with him from the beginning.

"Yes, I want to; for then I shall be easier when you are about. Then you will understand me, let me do or say what I will. Still, I don't know how to say it; for it shows perhaps a want of trust in your manliness. But I *do* know, Dr. Wethergreen," now looking him earnestly in the face, "I have seen men as sensible and as little vain, perhaps, as yourself, who, if a simple lady of my age, (past the age when most girls are married, or engaged to be married, as you know) if she is unreserved and cordial with them, when she likes them, just as she is with the women that she likes; if she is glad to see them, when they come and lets them see it unequivocally that she is; sorry when they go, and if she lets them see this too, just as she would let a female friend see it; and if, as she is inclined, out of the rare pleasure she has in their rare good company, she says with her friendly looks and tones, 'Come again; come whenever you feel disposed; we shall always be glad to see you,' they believe that she thinks of nothing in the world but of marriage, and of having them for her husband. They believe that she smiles to this, and modulates her voice to this end, says 'Come again,' to this end."

"Ah, Doria!"

"They do! as sensible men as you, Dr. Wethergreen; for I have both heard and seen it. I've felt it too," with unsteady tones, "more than once. For I like gentlemen's company. I like to talk with them. I am spontaneously inclined to be unreserved with them in whatever I say; but I can't be. I have to watch myself, my eyes, my lips and my whole manner."

"This is too bad, Doria, if you think so!"

said Dr. Joseph, with deprecating looks and tones.

"I know so; for, as I told you, I have seen it and heard it; against others and against myself." Again she bowed her head and spoke with shaken tones,

"So I keep myself, in a way, braced up, as you have seen me, when single gentlemen whose age and position would seem to indicate them as suitable for me, are about."

Dr. Joseph now laughed heartily. Doria half laughed and half-cried.

"So, Doria?"

"So, Dr. Wethergreen, I am never truly myself with you, nor with any other unmarried gentleman 'of a certain age,' that I like. If, one moment, or one hour, I forget my caution and chat and laugh, on and on, as I would with a friend who already has a wife, or a betrothed, in the next I recollect myself; and then I long to say to you or to him, 'I wouldn't marry you, sir, if you *think* I would. I like you and like to talk with you; but I wouldn't marry you if you were made of gold; or, rather, unless you were made of gold, and so, fit for being taken to the mint and afterward used for benevolent purposes.'"

Dr. Joseph fairly went off his feet, laughing. And Doria laughed now without any tears in her eyes.

"If I were beautiful, like Caddy and many others, I should feel differently," Doria added, when they had had their laugh out. "For a beautiful girl does not *presume*, if she advances even so far. Or, if she does, all the allowance in the world is made for it, for her loveliness' sake."

"Ah, Doria! you don't know!"

"Yes, I do. I have had a chance. I have an uncle who is a fine man, and a rich one, and a widower. I have two cousins who easily attract, or, at least, who think they do, without intending it; even intending fairly to *not* attract; and I have heard what they have to say. It is in a few words of delicate utterance with them, always; for they are gentlemen. But I would a thousand times rather carry myself round stiff as Mrs. Isphichin, all the days of my life, than that such things should be said of me by such men as they are; rather than see the shrugging of shoulders, even so slight, and the lifting of the eyebrows, when my name was spoken. It is *you* that don't know about these things, Dr. Wethergreen."

"I mean that you don't know the character of your face and its expression, when you under-rate it as you do now, and as I have heard you more than once before. I like your face."

"I too like it; but I know that it is a homely face, for all that. No, Dr. Wethergreen! I know what you would undertake to make me believe. I do not want to believe it, trust me. I am willing it should be just as it is. I like my very homely face as well as Caddy or any one can like her very beautiful face. All is, a beautiful woman can go *her* ways, a homely one can go hers; but hers must be quieter, more unobtrusive, else shoulders and eyebrows are lifted very high in some quarters; especially, *especially*, if, like this homely woman who makes such long speeches this evening, she really likes to talk often with those gentlemen who are really worth talking with, and if like her they are impulsively apt to show their likings."

"Well, we will let it go so. But I dare say you have ten apprehensions where you need not have more than one."

"I dare say. But one can never know."

"And this is what made Doria run so?" laughed Dr. Joseph.

"Yes."

"What made her take such pains to conceal her goodness to Mrs. Mercer and little Roxy?"

"Yes. One thing more, and then you must go home; for I engaged to go over to Lowell street, to come home with mother and Caddy. I was to be there to take my tea with them; and you see," directing his attention to the mantle clock, "it is quite time."

"What is the one thing more?"

"Why, I am just as *sure*," she said, speaking with emphatic earnestness, "that neither would you marry me, as that I would not, under any circumstances, marry you. So there it is; the whole affair, before our eyes. I shall *know*, after this, that you will not misconceive my meaning and purposes. I can be ever so glad to see you; can tell you, in all manner of ways, that I like you, and you will understand that it is as I would like a brother. Exactly. That is, as I would like a brother who was well read, genial and manly, like yourself."

"I thank you, I am sure, Doria," said Dr. Joseph, with a kind voice, with kind eyes.

He shook hands with her; left his "regards for mother and sister Cad," and was gone; gone with bounding, sinewy tread.

Doria, her lips parted with a well pleased expression, looked after him until he was out of sight. Then she went, singing a pleasant air with good, grateful words to it, to prepare for her walk.

She went, softly humming the same pleasant air, as she crossed the square where few people were. And she said more than once within

herself—"It is so good to be thoroughly understood!"

CHAPTER XI.

BIRDY was not so much to Dr. Joseph in those busier, more prosperous times, as in the old days when he sat and waited, with none but her to comfort him. He *loved* her as well as ever, though; and admired her more; for when he saw how glad the little creature was when he came; how one minute she lifted her head and "poured her throat" in the long, long melody, and the next came eagerly clinging to the bars that separated them, pressing her breast against them, he knew how much she loved him, and how much she missed him when he was gone; and then he called her, with the tenderest voice, "Contented little thing!" and "Darling!" and told her, holding her to his breast or cheek, with both hands, that she was the dearest, best bird in the whole world, to sing and eat her dinner, and be so busy when he was gone; for Nan had many a story to tell about how birdy sang "all to herself" when he was gone; about how she went in once and she was busy eating her seed, another time and she was in the bath "trying to see how far she could make the water fly."

Little Kate came often tripping to see the bird and little Nan; for soon, between the girls, there sprang up a close liking. The delicate, town-bred Kate taught Nan all the prettiest steps she had learned at Mrs. Bundy's school, and many still prettier ones, that she herself, out of her graceful spirit, improvised as she taught. Nan, the practical, the round-cheeked, the round-limbed, the farm-bred, "took the steps" as well as she could, any way; and when out of breath with it, as she soon was, always, she threw herself into the wide arm-chair, made room for Kate; and, when she came, they sat there very lovingly, very contentedly together, while Nan taught Kate the Lord's prayer. Both of the fatherless ones thought this very beautiful—"Our Father who art in heaven." They both loved to say that, and to repeat it, before going on with the rest.

Mrs. Ambrose took comfort in hearing the words, as she went about her work, or sat at a window with her sewing. She loved all the dear Scripture words of protection and consolation; for once more was her boy far from her, in the rough world where so many dangers lay. She had heard from him once. He had reached San Francisco safely and was well.

"But I have a prodigiously uncomfortable feeling about the heart, mother and little Nan,"

he wrote, "at every thought of the dear old places, and the dear old friends in them. I had when I left, and before I left, all along, whenever I thought of it. It was as if I were wrung and twisted and screwed; and I wonder what made me come. I suppose it was the New England blood in my veins, the New England cordage along my bones and in my muscles. I imagine it was that. I remember that some English writer or other, who saw how, in our country, the son breaks away from the father, and both the father and the son from the old homestead, laid it to lack of attachment to friends and places. He didn't understand it at all. His *old* blood is so different from our *new*, you see."

His word to Dr. Joseph was—"Take good care of mother and little Nan. Don't let them miss me."

To his mother and Nan it was—"Be cheerful when I am away, that you may write and tell me that you are cheerful, that poor Jo may find it pleasant with you."

He sent enclosed two little rings of California gold, one for Nan, one for Kate. The rings, the grateful thoughts and words of the giver, that had their origin in the gift, were, after all, the most beautiful links of the band that kept those girls together.

Ambrose came across Ike Allen one day just before he left. It was a raw, early-October day; and the little fellow was purple and curled up in his old, thin, summer suit.

"Cold?" asked Ambrose, with his hand on the boy's head, and looking down with a smile into his face.

"Kind o' cold," shuddering from head to foot. "Mother's goin' ter git me some good, warm—some *good, warm* clothes"—he repeated the words as if his mind liked to dwell on them—"s soon 's she can. Father's lame, ye see. He havn't got but one foot, any way; and that's got sores on it."

Ambrose had heard how cunning lies are told to impose upon the credulous. The memory of it came now in the way of a caution; but he whistled it off, trusting in the honest face; and, above all, pitying the curled-up, shivering frame. He said, "Come—come with me, Ike," to the boy; took him round to Tenney's; and, in a few minutes, the boy was running homeward in a warm glow and with his bright eyes sparkling, "to show 'em ter mother! ter mother!" This was what he said to the laughing Ambrose, when he darted out of the shop on his way, habited in his strong, thick clothes, and carrying his old in a bundle.

Ambrose went one day to the old home of the

architect. He wanted, at the least, to see him, and show him a friendly face. But he had gone and left no sign of returning, or of his exact whereabouts. He should go first to Boston, where he learned his art, he told his neighbors. He thought he should soon go from there to some of the western cities; but was not certain of the measure. At any rate, wherever he went, whether he ever saw them again or not, his memory of their sympathy in his trials would always be kept fresh; would always do this one great thing for him, make him love his race better, and believe more confidently in the good there is in the human heart, ready to come out into exercise when the strong circumstances call for it.

Mr. Harvey's horse and carriage were, all along, at Dr. Joseph's service, whenever he had need of them to visit patients out of the town; and would be, their owner told Dr. Joseph, with sincere eyes on his face, until he was abundantly able to keep them of his own.

Mrs. Harvey knew and remembered all the young doctor's favorite dishes; so that, not a week passed, in which honest little Willy did not come and get hold of his finger, to lead him off, as he said with bright eyes, "over to our house to see what we've got for you!"

Mrs. Holmes was forever putting her right arm to all manner of movements and tests, to reassure herself and others of this—of this; that it was in all respects equal to her left; in some respects superior. And it was Dr. Wethergreen, with his cold water and his little pills and powders, that had done it! She sent for him to come whenever there was the slightest pretext. Her husband was willing. He was as anxious as herself to evince his patronage of the young practitioner. But he often laughed at her. And one day he told her that he believed she would now and then bump the boys' heads together to get up bruises on them, to be in want of some of Dr. Wethergreen's arnica, if nothing else would turn up.

Drs. Gravesend and Coffin were almost done laughing and shrugging their shoulders about "Dr. Wethergreen's practice." They tried some times to say something facetious tending that way; but were themselves conscious of failure.

And thus matters stood when Thanksgiving came; when Dr. Joseph, after having breakfasted with his aunt and little Nan, after having made it sure that Kate and her mother would come to dine and spend the rest of the day with them, went into the cars and sat down with folded arms, to be taken to his father's house. He had not been there since Thanksgiving, a

year ago; when, so far as his own affairs were concerned, he could only say, "By-and-bye, father! by-and-bye, mother," and so on.

Now he could have other things to tell them; and he longed to be there.

CHAPTER XII.

THE winter was ended. It was late evening, of the last day of the last month; and Dr. Joseph sat, with the book he had been reading open, under his hand, thinking it over. He could see that his patronage, the favor with which he was regarded there at M—— had been steadily increasing; inasmuch that, whichever way he went now, warm, friendly eyes beamed on him, friendly hands took his to their grasp. Especially the poor Irish blessed him; when by carefully watching his ways they satisfied themselves that now, with the rich calling him and favoring him, he was just as faithful toward them, just as patient and as tender, as when he had none but them and a few others as poor and humble as they.

He was thankful for this; thankful that to so many homes he had gone with healing on his hands; but he mourned for little Kate, whose beautiful feet lay so still then beneath the sod. Her Father in heaven called her; and his utmost care by day and by night had no power to stay her going. He thought of the child's animated, beautiful life, of all she was worth to her mother, to him, and to the large numbers of relatives and of "little mates," as she called them with loving voice; and his heart was sick, that, for all he could do, she had passed away. He felt then that for all varieties and degrees of success here on the earth, there are painful drawbacks; that in the midst of them there comes often to us this lesson that we so often need—"Lean not on earth; 'twill pierce thee to the heart." His mind dwelt on the lesson as it comes in the poet's words, and in the Saviour's—"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." And he prayed that he might be kept from setting his heart on any earthly success, any earthly good; that when the good, the success, the treasure came, he might take it into faithful hands, take it with a grateful heart, to be sure; but with a fidelity, a thankfulness, turning first and last, and in the midst of all times to God.

Kate kept saying, "Our Father who art in heaven," with beautiful eyes, with a thrilling voice. She died as she said, "Our Father." He thought of this; thought how all the dying call upon the Father and the Saviour. And out of a heart melted at once into penitence and high

resolve, he asked of the Father that, not only in the hours of his death, but in all the hours of his active life, he might remember Him and call upon Him.

Tranquilized and softened by his reflections, Dr. Joseph's thoughts went back and forth, back and forth, through the bright winter days, the genial winter evenings; turning oftenest, as it must be confessed, to some rooms out on east Hanover street, where curtains and carpets and gilded volumes were radiant in the light of gas and of a glowing coal fire; and where faces were radiant with the welcome for him, with the inward intelligence, the inward enjoyment of life. He saw a lady of fifty-five in mourning, with a delicate face and thin black curls shading it, and with a quiet, high-bred air, who often looked up from her work or her reading to speak, or to smile at something the rest were saying. He saw a lady "of uncertain age;" (only Doria's age was no uncertainty to *him*; she had told him long ago that she was twenty-eight; just his age) saw her frolicking merrier than any kitten, when only himself, Caddy and mother, and those that she loved were about; and saw how, when widower Curtis and bachelor Blake came in and put their eyes on her, she wore, at once, the old manner he remembered seeing in old times set up against himself; the manner half defiant, half humorous, half earnest and grave, (if the reader *will* only, this once, allow us so many halves!)

He saw a younger girl, a more beautiful, a stiller girl, who sat contentedly at Doria's feet and looked up to her. He saw that her whole being brightened when he came; and often, at other times, when he spoke to her, and when their glances met. He understood, now that he thought long and closely about it, that as Doria's face and bearing, even in her utmost friendliness and unreserved cordiality toward him, said, as plainly as her lips had ever done, "I like you; but I wouldn't marry you if you were made of gold"—so Caddy's, the dear, sweet-voiced Caddy's said, "I love you. I will be anything to you that you ask."

But he would not ask her to be anything to him, poor as he was, in debt as he was. He would never need her so much as then; he believed that this was true. He could understand very well how happy it would make him, if she sat by him then, as so often he had seen her in the winter evenings sit by Doria, with her hands clasped, lying on his knee, and her sweet face upturned to his. But he would never take her away from her life of ease and plenty at home, and bring her to share *his* life of self-denial and uncertain prosperity. If another year there at

M—— did all for him that he might reasonably hope, he could ask her! And——

But he would think no more about it. He would put Caddy and the home with Caddy in it, away from his thoughts and go to his rest, that to-morrow he might be fit for his duty. He would so discipline his heart that his love should not fill it, or engross its powers. He would not stay by any idol; but, God helping him, he would go steadily forward in ripening his capacities for rendering and receiving good. Then if the time ever came when he could bring Caddy to his home, he would be found worthy of her; worthy and able to take her by the hand and lead her, through all her life with him, close beside the still waters.

CHAPTER XIII.

"WHAT is my sister Caddy thinking about?" It was Dr. Joseph who asked the question. He had been accustomed all through the spring and summer, to call both Doria and Caddy "sisters," and Mrs. Phillips "mother." He and Caddy were walking with a large company—from whom they were just then a little separated—near the Falls above M——.

"She is thinking that this is a beautiful world, and——"

"Well?" smiling, and with his eyes on hers.

"And that we who live in it ought to be very grateful and very pure. It troubles me thinking what a poor life I live, when I see how perfectly beautiful the waters are, and the sky, and the woods, and everything that one sees in the natural world." She turned her eyes from the leaping waters to the sunset sky, and to the islands in the river where the dark pines grow; and on her features lay the softened expression of delight mingled with pain. Dr. Joseph was at no loss to understand what she felt. He himself felt the same. He had felt it many times standing in that same spot. I suppose that multitudes have felt it standing there, and had their lives exalted thereby; so that the place is, as it were, one of God's own temples, made with His own hands, filled and consecrated to inspiration by His own holy spirit.

Dr. Joseph said something of this kind to Caddy. He drew her hand through his arm and held it in his, saying that he wished they might oftener come there together; wished that everywhere they might be together, sharers of the same life, the same endeavor, the same cares; wished that she might be his *own*, his cherished wife.

Caddy bowed her head and was silent, until,

the second time he said, "If it can be that Caddy wishes, or will consent to the same——"

Then, when she spoke, she consented to the same; with trembling voice, with tearful eyes, but with a heart very firm in its love and womanly trust.

CHAPTER VX.

NOVEMBER had come, ushered in with all her glory of many colored garlands, of clear skies and dew-bespangled turf.

Ambrose had come from California richer than ever, more generous than ever; but far less broad of face and chest, far less handy and spirited. When people asked for the cause, he said a few brief things about "one hard campaign off there that used him up;" then began to talk persistently of other matters. When he saw that neither his mother nor Dr. Joseph were satisfied, that they still kept grave eyes on his face, waving a light dismissal with his hand, he began walking the floor, merely adding, "This is all, mother. It is all, cousin Jo. I am as well as any man need to be, I assure you: And as happy. So come, Jo! Let's go and take a turn. I've got somebody at the City Hotel that I want to show you. No, mother, I don't bring him here at present. Don't say a word to Doria or Caddy, or anybody that I have any one there; for I've got a mighty nice plan in my head. A plan that I like," he continued, looking at Dr. Joseph meantime, and brushing the nap of his hat round with his coat-sleeve. "I want to tell you about it. Good-by, mother."

His mother's eyes followed him to the door.

"Good-by, mother," he repeated, laughing at her searching looks. "You shall know, mother, all in good time. It will be all the better for keeping; like the good corn-porridge you used to make when I was a boy."

He smacked his lips thinking of the porridge; wondered, he said, whether it would taste to him now as it used to; got a promise from his mother that she would make some and see, and then went. His mother, poor woman, stood some minutes in the same spot, thinking of his "used to;" new words for him, spoken with a new and to her ear, a sad cadence. She had heard it already several times, and he had only been at home two days.

He had taken a larger house in the same neighborhood; had bought it; and already it was in Affutt's hands (conjunctly with his own, his mother and Dr. Joseph's) to be beautifully fitted up and prepared for—"for you, good mother," he said, "and for good little Nan; and,

by the way, how she grows; how she improves, mother!—oh, but it is so bad that little Kate is dead! for she loved me, you see; and I loved her. As I was going to say—for you and Nan, mother, for cousin Jo and the little creature he is going to take home with him, and for me, when I am here.”

His mother hoped that he would always be there.

“No! no, mother! I must go and come; come and go. I must stir; this is natural for me. Although I believe I don’t feel altogether so much like it as I used to.”

His mother was not sorry for that, if he was as well as he used to be. She only wished that he would settle down as his cousin Joseph was going to do. There was plenty of room for it in his new house. The south-west room opposite Joseph’s and Caddy’s parlor—if, instead of taking that for his bed-chamber, as he had planned, he would have that fitted for him and *somebody else*, (some good girl like Caddy) and have his bed-chamber back of that! With the new Irish girl, Mary, to help her, she could easily take care of them all. Oh, if he *would* stay.

Well, perhaps he would, mother! Perhaps he would! Stranger things than that *had* come to pass in this world and in his day. Perhaps he would manage to like Caddy’s first bride’s-maid, pretty Mary Walton, whose attendant he was to be. He would try, mother! He would! She should see how he would try.

He laughed and went. His mother laughed then; but she sat down and cried as soon as he was gone. She looked over to the new house; and thought that there in that house, stately, beautiful as it was, she was to meet an overwhelming sorrow. But she said, “God will prepare me. He will be with me, whatever else fails. And if I can trust in Him.” Then she wiped her tears, and went about the house, making ready for the marriage; making ready to leave the old house for the new.

They were married in the evening, at church. It was Mrs. Harvey and Doria’s plan; Mrs. Harvey’s, because she knew of so many—Joseph’s staunchest friends too they were—who wanted to see them married; Doria’s, because she wanted something strong and summary in the proceedings, she said. Perhaps she calculated upon crying all the time, and upon feeling that she might in so large a crowd. She did cry all the time, at any rate; and people pitied her. People took her hands at the close of the services, and said, “I’ll be your sister now, Doria dear.”

Drs. Gravesend and Coffin were there to see the ceremonies. They saw the weeping; (there was

not a little of this done by one and another; for Mrs. Ambrose was there with her eyes on her boy, who was so fine a figure there by the bridegroom, with her presentiment lying heavy on her heart; and little Kate’s mother, filled with the thoughts of her beautiful darling; and many, many others, who in that solemn time felt deeply for the bridal pair, or felt deeply for themselves.) They heard the prayer for love, for heaven’s blessedness on the earth. As they listened to the words of the prayer, they had their eyes on the bridegroom and the bride, saw how a manly inspiration kindled his whole being; and how a reliance upon him who had chosen her, softened and irradiated hers. Their eyes met. They met again at the door going out; and Dr. Gravesend said to the other, “That was a fine sight.”

“Yes,” replied Dr. Coffin. “He’s a fine fellow. He’s generous and good-hearted. Caddy Phillips has done well; and I’m glad for her.”

“So am I.”

And they were. The old enmity, the old folly—thank God, was over.

Birdy, bless her! had her head tucked snugly beneath her wing all this time, at a window in the dining-room of the new house. When they came home from church, Ambrose tried to wake her to tell her about her new mistress and show her to her; but she only nestled a little in her gentle way, moved along her perch a little and then was still again.

“I had a bird—a dear creature,” said Caddy. She stood with Dr. Joseph and Ambrose watching the bird.

“Did you lose it?” asked Ambrose, turning round so as to face her.

“Yes, it flew away!”

“When?”

“Oh, more than a year ago. A year ago last August.”

“I wonder if you ever heard from her?” looking steadily at her; not looking at all toward Dr. Joseph.

“Yes. I heard that she was with one who needed her, and so I let her go. But I missed her so much; for I never saw so dear a bird. This one—is it yours, Joseph?”

“Yes; yours and mine; *ours*.”

She dropped her eyes a moment beneath his glance. Her heart, one saw, was in a tumult at the dear word, spoken with the dear voice. But soon she raised her head to look once more at birdy.

“It is the same color of mine,” said she, scanning it closely. “A beautiful color.”

“Are you a connection of the Cunnighams on Lowell street?” asked Ambrose.

"Mrs. Cunningham was my father's daughter by an early marriage," she replied, with questioning eyes on his face.

"That's it!" said he to Joseph, with a light, brisk tap of his fingers upon his palm. "And so," speaking to Caddy—"and so Mr. Cunningham is your round-about brother, cousin Caddy, my dear? And so he advertized your bird?"

"Yes," the questioning eyes going to and fro between him and Dr. Joseph.

"Caddy! Caddy Wethergreen!" cried Ambrose, coming a step or two nearer, "where—what have you done with the pin of California gold, pray? where is it?"

Caddy looked again at him, at her husband, who stood watching the workings of her lovely features, the kindling expression of her fine eyes, and at the bird. She asked her husband whether that was her bird; whether he was the one who needed it and sent her the brooch; and when she heard from them all about it, when Joseph took "the little sleepy-head," as Ambrose called her,

out and put her into Caddy's hands, she kissed her, "called her pet names," and cried over her. The tears, though, were in part of pity for her husband, that ever, in his life-time, he had been so lonely.

CHAPTER XV.

Our pages are already filled.

With Ambrose's friend at the City Hotel, with his mother's heavy presentiment, as well as with the good fellow himself, we have more to do.

And dear Doria's affairs—there is not a little to be said yet upon Doria's affairs. But here there is no room. *She* wouldn't mind their being huddled. She would like it best, on the whole; for she has a sort of instinctive repulsion toward all emblazonment of herself, or her proceedings. As this would not, however, suit us, or our readers, we shall take liberties with both in a sequel to this present story of Dr. Wethergreen's Practice.

HIRAM HAPGOOD'S SURPRISE.

BY MARIETTA HOLLEY.

SQUIRE SKINNER was a very rich man—the richest in his native village; and he had won his wealth, in a large measure, through adherence to the old adage, “A penny saved is worth two earned.” His enemies said he was penurious, and a few even called him tricky, and not to be depended upon in a bargain.

He was loud in his professions of Christianity, however. He attended the meetings of the church punctually, whenever there were no collections to be taken up. At conference meetings, too, he was nearly always present, and sang with unction; but, unfortunately, a little through his nose. He prayed frequently and powerfully; he exhorted sinners, and in a very loud voice: in fact, all the power of his lungs he seemed willing to offer as a free gift to the church; but when it was a question of money, he managed somehow to be indisposed at home.

The minister's salary was already scanty, but Squire Skinner thought they had better make it less. “When one is toiling for the good of souls,” he said, “one should not be given to love of filthy lucre.” Whereat one of the profane retorted that “the minister couldn't live on souls; and if he could, he would starve to death on such souls as Squire Skinner's.”

His household consisted of a daughter and a son. Rose, the daughter, was about seventeen; with a sweet, wild-rose face; large, wistful gray eyes; and a tender, sensitive mouth. Not from the old squire, however, did she inherit that refined face. To see the two together you would be unconsciously reminded of some rare white lily, growing in the shade of a grim old rock. Her mother had died when Rose was only eight years old; but the daughter had a memory of a face like her own, only paler and more shadowy: a memory of a sweet, tender face, that looked upon her, crowned with that divine halo—a mother's love.

It was a pale, shadowy face, indeed; and it faded quite away from earth while Rose was still a child, and the baby brother was just beginning to walk about. The baby was now a fleshy, uncomfortable boy of ten, with immense powers of being disagreeable. He had light-blue eyes; hair nearly white; hands and feet that were forever out of place, and equally a discomfort to himself and others; to all which he added an appetite of

matchless power, seemingly insatiable. His chief pursuit was what he called “poking fun at folks,” the chief victim and sufferer being his sister Rose.

He did not dare, however, to play his pranks before his father. No, the squire condemned all mirth, as the first of the seven deadly sins. When Bob, therefore, snatched the chair away as his sister went to sit down; or rushed out at her, with white drapery and direful groans, from dark closets; or was seized with any other exquisite humorous fancy, he knew his sister was too tender-hearted to complain to his father, and bring disgrace and contumely down upon the little white head, that, with all its faults, was so inexpressibly dear to her.

On the evening our story opens, Rose was sitting on the old brown door-step, busily engaged in sewing: making a shirt for her father; for she was housekeeper, cook, and sewing-girl; her aunt, who lived with them, being one of those old ladies who are more ornamental than useful.

She had a terrible headache, too, besides being tired with a hard day's work; and when Bob came up, with a wild warwhoop, and a grotesque pumpkin mask over his face, she entreated him, “not to make so much noise.”

“Why not?” says Bob, speaking through the mouth of his yellow mask, like an oracle speaking through the wide lips of an idol. “Why not?”

“Because I have such a terrible headache, dear.”

“Headache!” says Bob, in a disdainful voice. And then he takes off his hollow mask, that she may see the full incredulity and derision of his face. “What's a girl good for? They're always havin' headaches. You feel awful big, don't you,” he says, “with your headache? Mebby you think you are goin' to be sick a-bed; you would feel awful big then, wouldn't you?”

That was a standing belief of Bob's, or at least he always professed it as such, that if Rose was sick, it made her haughty and conceited. But whatever else Bob would have said, was cut short; for a loud rapping at the front door, at this moment, interrupted him.

They were sitting in a little porch, at the back of the house.

“Run and open the door, that's a good boy,” said Rose. “I really am too sick.”

Bob obeyed at once; not from any spirit of

obedience, but from pure curiosity. A young man stood upon the door-step: a handsome young man, with a dark, resolute eye, making manly a face that would otherwise have been almost feminine in its gentleness.

"Does Squire Skinner reside here?" said the young man.

"Yes, sir."

"He is trustee of this district?"

"Yes, sir."

"I was directed here. I have applied for the situation of school-teacher. Can I see Squire Skinner?"

"Yes, sir, when he comes home, sir," said Bob, with elaborate politeness, and speaking the "sir" with emphasis. "He is down to the village; but he will be home soon, sir."

"Can I wait here, till he comes?"

"Oh, yes, sir! Walk in, sir," said Bob, and he led the way to the back porch, walking with the stateliness and importance befitting one who is ushering in a stranger. And thus Harry Graham went to meet his fate.

Bob said his father was in the village. It was true. At that very moment, Squire Skinner was sitting on an inverted butter-tub, on the steps of the grocery store, with Hiram Hapgood on an empty peach-crate beside him, settling the final doom of those who were not of the elect. The business was congenial to both of them, and time passed rapidly, as they dealt with the souls of sinful men, and whittled shingles. Squire Skinner, however, was harder in his judgments than his companion: a long, lean, lank youth, whose sallow countenance had none of the firm, sanguinary glow that marked the squire's face, as he irrevocably settled the doom of the lost.

"There is not a ray of hope in their case; there will not, there cannot be a soul saved, only jest the elect," says the squire; and his face looks cheerful, though firm, as he says it.

But Hiram Hapgood, though he agrees with him, has a shade of sadness and regret on his countenance. He seems to be sorry for the world, and as if he would be glad if the squire had not made the decision.

At last, the squire, having settled the doom of the world at large, descends to minutiae. One of his favorite topics is the conduct of our Government towards the Indians. This he condemns bitterly. He is for having them all killed at once. "No Quaker nonsense for me," he says. "Extermination is the only remedy." And he quotes largely from the Old Testament wars, to confirm and establish his opinion.

He explains to Hiram what his views and wishes really are. His plan is to have every

young, able-bodied man called out by Government, armed and equipped with muskets, bayonets, swords, and, if need be, packages of arsenic and ratsbane, in order to slay and smite the Indians hip and thigh, and "wipe them off the face of the earth," to use his final expression.

Hiram's wish and purpose is to join with the squire in each and every one of his propositions, no matter how hard they are; but this is a little too much for him. Not that he so much dislikes having the Indians smitten and vanquished; but being very cowardly by nature, he fears that if such a war ensues, he, being young and able-bodied, will be obliged to join in the conflict. He hesitates, looks embarrassed, and finally remarks:

"But, by Jehosiphath! Won't it be rather tuff, you know, as it were—on the Injuns, as it were—"

If Hiram ventures to differ from Squire Skinner, it is with extreme diffidence; and the "as it were," which he invariably adds to his remarks, is placed something as an elephant places his foot upon the weak planks of a bridge, before he ventures his whole body thereon. Or as a blind man gropes his way forward with a cane, to feel how the land lays, and judge of obstructions, before he ventures onward himself.

But the squire's words are firm, decided, like spears, each one finding the heart of the object aimed at. And he does not seem at all pleased to have his neophyte seem to doubt his decision. For one great reason why Hiram Hapgood is favored by Squire Skinner, beyond any of the other youths of Hevvolton, is because he always so obediently, not to say slavishly, agrees with his hardest opinions.

To tell the truth, Hiram has a strong motive in endeavoring, by all possible means, to conciliate the squire; for he is very much in love with sweet Rose Skinner, or as much in love as it is possible for anyone constituted like him to be.

He has, according to his light, wooed her for years. He has gazed at her steadily and persistently, nearly every moment of the time, at evening meetings and singing schools. He has even gone a step further. Dressed in his best, and crowned with a strong smell of hair oil, as a halo, he has presented himself at Squire Skinner's, for an evening call. But as yet he has made no progress. And his visits were made seasons of poignant agony, to both himself and Rose, by reason of Bob's hints and open revilings.

To Rose, indeed, who was entirely fancy free, there was an undercurrent of fun and comicality in Bob's remarks and actions. But to Hiram, who was in deadly earnest, to have himself and his love made objects of ridicule, before the sweet embodiment of all his hopes, was hard indeed.

He has endeavored, meantime, to bribe Bob with candy and nuts, to be on his side; but Bob has gradually become so exorbitant, that it is impossible to satisfy him. Now, when he spends an evening there, it is with a consciousness, that, while he is making his brightest remarks, Bob is making faces at him behind his back. Or, perhaps, drawing his portrait on the wall. Or waiting for a chance to slyly pin placards to his coat-skirts. Or standing just within the next room, and plainly visible to Rose, but to no one else, making wild gestures to all his, Hiram's, remarks: smiting his breast, tearing his hair, kneeling in agony, or raising his clenched hands.

Hiram had caught Bob at these pranks, once or twice, and now he was in constant fear of their repetition. So, whenever Rose smiled, and turned her head away from the open door, that led into the other room, Hiram knew what was the matter.

But if he couldn't buy up Bob, he could agree with her father. And so he echoed the squire's opinions on every subject. And being by far the richest young man in the place, and as penurious as miserably as it was possible for anyone to be at his age, he was a prime favorite with Rose's parent: who had signified, in consequence, to Rose, his firm determination to have Hiram Hapgood for a son-in-law. Rose had no affection for her wealthy and prudent suitor. Her heart was like the soul of Undine—asleep, waiting the magic touch that should awaken it. In every gentle and amiable way, she had endeavored to show the state of her mind to Hiram. But it was not possible for her to be unkind or rude to any human being. She was always cool and indifferent; but as Hiram had not come out in plain terms, and asked her to be his wife, things drifted along until Harry Graham came upon the scene. From that hour, the pangs of jealousy rent his soul.

Discouraged by her cool manner, encouraged by her father, and tortured by Bob, life's path had not been over smooth to Hiram Hapgood. But worse had now come. Heretofore, he had had no rival; and so, of course, had felt none of the pangs of jealousy. To none of the rustic swains, though every one of them would have been overjoyed to have won her favor, did she show any preference. But, alas for Hiram Hapgood, when the handsome, gentlemanly Harry Graham became an inmate of her father's dwelling, things became different.

When Squire Skinner, on his return from judging the world, and settling the affairs of the Indians, heard that an applicant for the teacher's situation was waiting to see him, he was just in the mood to be gracious. His late conversation

had satisfied his sanguinary instincts, and softened his mood. The handsome, noble face of Harry Graham, moreover, impressed even him favorably. But most of all, he was influenced by the very moderate terms that Harry asked. After a short conversation, the teacher was engaged. The squire also agreed to take Harry as a boarder, tempted by the very liberal sum offered.

The next Monday, accordingly, Harry Graham commenced his school. Bob, whose behavior had been remarkably beautiful, for him, walked beside the new teacher to the school-room, giving him all kinds of necessary and unnecessary information and advice. Bob showed his admiration and partiality, moreover, by offering to dig worms, if he wanted to go fishing; to lend him his jack-knife, pop-gun, and hints. His demeanor through the day was also remarkably good; so that, at night, Harry was able to give excellent accounts of him to Rose. And this made her gentle heart happy; for, despite the martyrdom Bob daily inflicted upon her—nay, perhaps by reason of it, so strange are the vagaries of human love—Bob was the very apple of her eye. The boy, mischievous as he was, was greatly attached to Rose, also; and he showed his affection in various uncomfortable ways, and at entirely unexpected moments: sometimes hugging her so violently that an inch more of pressure must necessarily have proved fatal, or kissing her when his lips were most hopelessly smeared with molasses or jelly.

But now, for awhile, Bob's demeanor was almost perfect. He had taken a great fancy to his new teacher, and seemed anxious to win his approbation; and as days passed by, this sentiment seemed to intensify instead of lessening. Harry Graham, indeed, was one of those fortunate ones who can win and keep a child's respect and love. But, of course, such goodness on the part of Bob would have been superhuman, if continued. So, one evening, when Rose and Harry Graham were the sole occupants of the sitting-room, in came the irrepressible Bob, and defiantly announced his resolution to go to the lake, seven miles distant, and spend the night there with Tom Hanchett, who was one of the most disreputable boys in the neighborhood. Rose remonstrated.

"You know, Bob," she said, "that father wouldn't let you go anywhere with Tom Hanchett; much less to the lake, to be away all night."

"But I want to help pull the scen," says Bob, obstinately. "Tom says it's fun to pull the whitefish in, and sturjens, and sammens. And say, don't you s'pose I can go? Don't you s'pose you can get father to lemme?"

"You know father wouldn't let you go, Bob."
"Well, you know you could get him to lemme, if you was a mind to. But girls are such shiftless things, they never will help a feller. I could probable get enough fish to last us the year 'round. Say, don't you s'pose you could get him to lemme?"
"No, Bob; you know I wouldn't ask him. You know I wouldn't dare to have you go."

"Oh, I wonder who you be, anyway? You wouldn't darst to have me go. You think you are somebody, don't you? You've got a beau—Hiram—that wears a brass handkerchief pin, hain't you? Oh, yes, and scents himself up with hair-oil. Oh, yes, you think you are somebody."

It would be utterly impossible to convey upon paper the scornful derision of Bob's voice and countenance, as he uttered these words.

"Oh, Bob," cried Rose, appealingly, while her sweet face, and even her white neck, were crimson with blushes.

"Well, ain't it brass, say? And don't he come here a-courtin' with it, Sunday nights, say? No wonder you feel big. No wonder you don't darst to let me stir out of the house."

Poor Rose! Heretofore, she had borne the laughter and contemptuous remarks of Bob, concerning her rustic admirer, with equanimity, and even, sometimes, with a sly enjoyment of his fun; but now, the very mention of his name in connection with her own, suddenly became perfectly unendurable. She glanced up at Harry Graham's face, which, despite the absurdity of the scene, had grown very grave; and then she burst into tears, and left the room.

Bob, conscience smitten, opened his eyes to their full extent, and scratched his white head ruefully. His teacher looked at him, reprovingly, and said, "How could you tease your sister so?"

"Well, I'm sorry; I'm blamed if I ain't. Hain't seen her cry before, since I tied a string 'round her kitten's neck, and let it down into the cistern: it was an awful hot day, and I let it down to cool it off; and the string slipped, and made a gallus of it, and hung it dead. I don't see what started her off so now. I was only pokin' fun at her. She don't like that feller, but father makes her treat him first-rate."

Harry Graham felt his heart grow absurdly light at this remark, though he could hardly have explained why. He had rather prided himself on his indifference towards women, until this summer. But he had not been at the squire's a week before he yielded utterly to the gentle, resistless power which Rose unconsciously exercised: an influence, in his case, that pervaded his soul as with a new birth, and filled all nature as with a fresher, diviner life.

Never were there such glorious, entrancing days as those that followed. Never were such starry, heavenly nights. Never such dreams—dreams of the lovely face that blessed his waking visions, or of the sweet face that flushed and kindled beneath his glance. Golden summer days they were, to both Harry Graham and Rose Skinner.

It chanced, the very day after Hiram Hapgood ventured to disagree with Squire Skinner, concerning the settlement of the Indian question, that Hiram was called to a distant part of the State, to the sick-bed of his only brother. He was detained there, moreover, for most of the summer; so that autumn was at hand when he returned. He returned, too, to find that Harry Graham had been winning golden opinions from all; and had won, he feared, what was of more value to him than anything else, save his property.

Alas for Hiram Hapgood! On the first evening of his arrival home, he hastened, after a hasty supper and a hasty toilet, to the squire's; but only to see the evident devotion of the handsome, gentlemanly young teacher to Rose, and to witness her evident interest in this brave, gentle suitor. Poor Hiram, his stay was short. In pity to himself, he left soon.

Bob had lately become possessor of a torch: a relic of a political torch-light procession. He delighted in walking out nights, carrying this new acquisition aloft, startling the neighbors with the unexpected appearance of his white head, lit up by the glaring reflection. On this evening, he prepared to accompany Hiram part of the way home, more that he might show off his torch than because he had any especial liking for Hiram. So, as he walked along, with the wind-woven torch casting weird and fitful reflections around them, he began, teasingly, to praise Graham.

"Did Rose like him?" asked Hiram, with a quavering voice.

"Golly, didn't she, though!" cried Bob. "And father—he took care of father, when he was sick—father liked him, oh! ever so much. And aunt Matilda never liked anybody so well before, nor Rose neither."

Poor Hiram! His heart sank low at these confidences. But how much more information he would have extracted will never be known; for at this very moment, an inopportune gust of wind extinguished the torch; and as Bob couldn't think of walking a step without its light, he left Hiram, and returned home at once.

All that night, Hapgood lay awake, plotting revenge, and trying to fashion some plan to defeat the handsome young school-teacher. Of course, he considered Graham an impostor; the

earnest wish being, as usual, father to the conviction. He was a moneyless adventurer, no doubt.

The more he pondered upon this, the more reasonable it seemed. "If I only knew where the fellow came from," he said. He had inquired, the day before; but nobody had seemed to know. "That, in itself, is sufficient proof," soliloquized Hiram. "He is, perhaps, a fugitive from justice. Why wasn't he willing to let the name of his former home be known?" Pondering this, he fell asleep, at last.

The next evening, Hiram met Bob Skinner, walking along, as usual, under the blazing light of his torch. The squire had sent him on an errand. Bob entered into conversation again. They talked of the weather; Bob's new dog; the hail-storm of the past week; the coming circus, that was advertised as being one of uncommon brilliancy, and which Bob wished to join; and finally, of the school-teacher.

"Do you know, Bob, as it were, where he came from? In fact, where his home was, and so forth?" said Hiram.

"No, not for certain," replied Bob. "But I have seen the name of a place, upstairs, on some books, when his trunk was open."

"What will you take, Bob, to get the address?"

Bob, like the thrifty speculator that he was, did not consent at once; for he saw Hiram was anxious. Finally, for the consideration of a two-bladed jack-knife, and a new pocket fishing-rod, he consented to copy the address, and say nothing. To do Bob justice, he never thought of any harm. He supposed it was only idle curiosity that was impelling Hiram. The next day, therefore, Hiram was possessor of the address: a thriving inland village, in another State. He wrote to the postmaster there, at once. The answer informed him, to his infinite delight, that Harry Graham had run away from an uncle, some three months before; that his uncle was a man of great wealth, and had adopted Harry, and brought him up as his own son; and proclaimed the fact that he was to be his heir. "But suddenly," continued the writer, "some difficulty had arisen between the two, of what nature no one knew; and Harry had left home; since which nothing had been heard of him."

Of course, having followed the guidance of duty so far, Hiram was not weak enough to shrink from the task of telling Deacon Skinner, at once, that he was harboring an impostor and a runaway in his house. "If for the sake of no one else," said Hiram to himself, "for Rose's sake he ought to be exposed."

Now, on that very morning, Harry Graham

had asked Squire Skinner's consent to marry his daughter. "Not at once," said the suitor, "for I have no fortune; but give your consent to the engagement, and oh, how I will work for her sweet sake." Harry, like all ardent young lovers, was certain that he could soon carve out a path in the future. "I can dare anything, endure anything, if only I can have this hope to inspire me," he said. "I had meant to conceal my love from Rose; I had meant to leave her entirely unfettered, until I was in a situation to woo her, and win her for my wife; but my love proved stronger than my will. I was betrayed into avowing my affection; I found that my love was returned; and I could not rest until I had told you, sir, and endeavored to win your consent to an engagement." Harry said much more, and talked so well and eloquently, that Squire Skinner could not but acknowledge he had acted in a manly, straightforward manner. But he did not, for all that, accord his consent. He said, on the contrary, that he would give an answer in a few days.

The fact was, the cautious squire wanted time to think of some plausible excuse for refusing. He feared that it would be very difficult to get Rose to listen to reason, very difficult to convince her how much better it would be for her future interest, to marry Hiram, a young man who had already a handsome property.

Personally, Squire Skinner liked Harry Graham. Had he and Hiram been equal in wealth, Squire Skinner would have chosen him at once. Bob did not exaggerate the matter at all, when he said that "father liked him." The squire recalled the tender, almost filial care, which Harry had shown when he was ill. He thought of his intelligence: his pleasant, manly ways. His heart sank within him, at the task of convincing Rose that it would not be best to "give up all for love, and the world well lost."

It was while he was pondering over all this, that Hiram brought the thrilling intelligence that Harry Graham was "a runaway, an outcast, and an impostor," as he phrased it.

The squire, at first, did not seem to show much indignation; and this puzzled and annoyed Hiram. He finished, therefore, rather curtly. "I have done my duty now," he said, "and leave the rest to you. Besides, I have to go back to my brother, who is worse again. They telegraphed for me, and I leave by the afternoon train." The squire civilly expressed his regret, thanked Hiram, and so they parted. But had Hiram seen the glow of satisfaction on the squire's face, as he walked off, muttering to himself: "So the uncle is rich," he would have taken the train in more gloomy spirits even than he did.

Harry, when confronted by Squire Skinner, did not deny Hiram's story. "Yes," he said, "my uncle and I did quarrel. It was over a difference of opinion. My uncle is hot-tempered, and told me to leave the house. I took him at his word. He said that I could not earn my living. Now, as you know, sir, I have proved that to be a mistake. My uncle told me that it would not be a month before I would be writing back to him for assistance. My answer was that I would never write to him for help, even if I starved by the wayside. Nor will I. More than that, I will never go back, unless he sends for me." Harry owned, however, that he had been too hasty. He said that his uncle had been kindness itself to him, until their difference; had lavished all that love and wealth could upon him. "But it was out of the question," the young man said; "for me to yield, in the matter. And as my uncle was determined I should obey him, or leave his house, I had, after all, you see, no alternative."

"May I ask what was the cause of the disagreement?" said the squire. "I can hardly think of anything that would justify your conduct, after all his kindness."

Thus pressed to the wall, Harry had to tell his secret.

"My uncle," he said, "wanted me to marry a lady, who, though excellent and even rich, I could not love. Knowing his wishes, I tried to like her; but could not. Pray, do not press me further. It is a thing too delicate to speak of. A loveless marriage is a crime."

Even Squire Skinner had to admit, that, in all this, there was no possible blame to be attached to Harry. "It is a great pity," he said; "but you could not have done otherwise." But he did not tell Harry of an idea that had dawned upon his mind, while listening.

He did not tell anyone; but that very day, he dispatched a letter to the offended uncle: as courteous and pleasant a letter as he could write; in which he told how a young gentleman—his nephew—had come there, and engaged the school; how faithful and industrious he had proved; how exemplary his conduct had been; how he had won the esteem and friendship of everyone; and how he had wooed and won the heart of the writer's daughter.

"And now," continued the astute old squire, "while pondering whether it would be prudent to give my daughter to an entire stranger, however well-conducted, I hear, accidentally, of your quarrel with Harry; and having taxed him with it, learn that it is true. Harry has said nothing save good of you," he added, "praising your constant kindness and care; but he adds that

he could not marry, where his affections were not given; and so had found it impossible to obey you, much to his sorrow."

In conclusion, Squire Skinner asked the advice of the old gentleman. "Harry is devotedly attached to my daughter, and wishes to marry her, just as soon as his circumstances will permit. My daughter is devotedly attached to Harry. Now I would ask, in all candor and confidence, ought I to give my daughter to your nephew? Will you, sir, do me the great kindness to reply at once, for I must arrive at some decision soon."

This letter found Harry's uncle sick in bed, his illness having been brought on, in great measure, by his fretting and worrying over the departure of his nephew. For he loved Harry, with the warm, impetuous love of hot-tempered people; and he had regretted bitterly the unreasonable demand he had made of him. But he was anxious to see him married, anxious to secure the fine old Graham property to heirs of his own line; for, failing heirs from Harry, the place was to go into the hands of a family he detested: a second cousin of his own, who had always been his bitterest enemy. Besides, the old man loved his own way, and had been so accustomed to having it, that he knew not how to brook opposition. When Harry took him at his word, and left, it had almost broken his heart. He was now longing to see his nephew, and yearning for a reconciliation. So, when Squire Skinner's letter came, he was ready to weep for joy. To say that he was overjoyed at the intelligence, is to say too little. He was rejoiced to learn that his remorseful fears were in vain; that Harry was alive and well; rejoiced to know that he was contemplating matrimony; rejoiced at the prospect thus opened for a reconciliation.

He wrote to Squire Skinner, at once, that he alone was to blame, and declared how gladly he would welcome Rose as Harry's wife. In conclusion, he entreated the squire to let them be married at once, and come to him. "I am so lonely and ill," he said, "and I do so want my boy. Tell them there is a warm welcome waiting for them, and that all I have is theirs."

Of course, Harry was overjoyed at the intelligence. He loved his uncle, and was only too glad to be reconciled, now that the hateful marriage was no longer insisted on. And then Rose—oh, he could wed Rose; at once.

He did not wed her at once, of course; but he did wed her very soon. The marriage came off, as speedily as Rose could be persuaded to it. The squire bestowed his warm blessing and approval on the happy pair. Aunt Matilda gave her tearful good wishes, and two patchwork bed-

quills, of high colors and astonishing patterns. Bob was in ecstasies over the prospect of unlimited cake and pastries, and learning that wedding-gifts would be expected of all the family, he commenced, in the most secret depths of the wagon-house, to whittle out, with his jack-knife, a bracket of most wonderful and fearful design; assuring aunt Matilda, his only confidant in the undertaking, "that he was whittling it out of his own head." On the night of the wedding, it was with great difficulty he could be persuaded not to parade, in front of the house, with his torch.

But while happiness and content reigned at the farmhouse, during the preparations for the marriage, one thought disquieted the squire. Hiram Hapgood would soon return; in fact, was liable to appear at any moment: and he must be told. He must, moreover, be given a good and respectable reason for being discarded by the squire. Of course, the latter could not give as a reason the knowledge he had gained of Harry's wealth, especially as he had gained that knowledge from Hiram. No, he must get some plausible excuse; and, if possible, it must be on some high moral ground. And while he was racking his brain, thinking what it should be, Hiram Hapgood called to see him, and the excuse came, as it were, by inspiration.

Hiram, who knew nothing of what had happened, had been pondering, during his absence, on some way by which he might win the squire entirely to his side. So, almost at the first moment of his arrival, he said, with the air of one who has been at last convinced:

"I have been thinkin' it all over, what you said about the Injins, squire. It will come tough on 'em; but I believe you wuz in the right of it; I believe they ought to be exterminated; killed right out, every one of 'em. I tell you, squire, it wuz your strong arguments that convinced me. It wuz the Bible texts that you brought up, about 'smotin' 'em hip and thigh,' as it were—"

Alas for Hiram Hapgood! Alas for the hapless lover! Here was the opportunity for which the squire had been seeking. Here was an opening to dismiss him logically and religiously.

What was Hiram's consternation, what his utterable dismay, when the squire said, coldly:

"It pains me, Hiram, to see a young man so ready to condemn. The Good Book says, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.' And though it is very unpleasant for me to do so, yet I consider it my duty to inform you that I feel I cannot entrust my daughter's happiness to a young man who is so bloodthirsty, so cruel, so savage, so sanguinary, in his instincts."

"But you said," cried Hiram, with wide-staring eyes, "you said yourself, squire, you said you believed so and so, as it were—"

"As I said, it pains me, Hiram," retorted the squire, inexorable as Rhadamanthus. "But I tell you, plainly, you never shall marry my daughter. I cannot, and will not, give her to a man who brings up the Bible—"

"But you did it yourself, squire; you—"

"As I said, Hiram," continued Squire Skinner, not heeding the interruption, "as I said, although it is a painful duty to perform, I must tell you that my daughter Rose will be married to Harry Graham, two weeks from to-day. I could not, conscientiously, give her to you, Hiram. I felt that I must guard her from an alliance with a young man who is, I fear, liable to wrest the Scriptures to his own destruction."

Hiram Hapgood's hands dropped to his sides. Not a word of remonstrance or self-vindication did he utter. But as the squire turned and left him, he stood watching the retreating form, with eyes that grew wider and wider with astonishment.

At last, he said a few words, that were seemingly wrung from the depths of his agonized spirit, and said them as if unconsciously.

"Jehosiphat!" he cried, "Pocahontas, and Joe Smith, as it were—"

OH, YOU LITTLE DARLING!

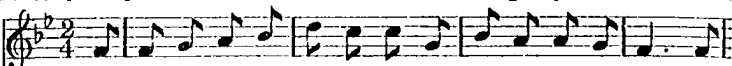
(HUMOROUS BALLAD.)

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Written and Composed by J. TABRAR.

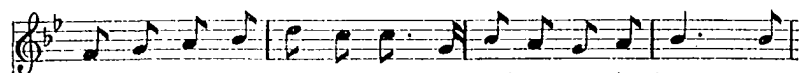

Arranged by VINCENT DAVIES.

Voice.

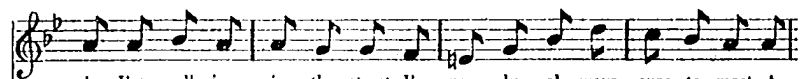



1. Oh, what a thing it is to be A girl with lots of beaux, The
2. Al-though I don't in-tend to wed, To set-tle down in life, I've
3. Up-on my word, I don't in-tend To wear a wed-ding ring, While

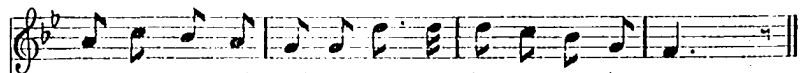
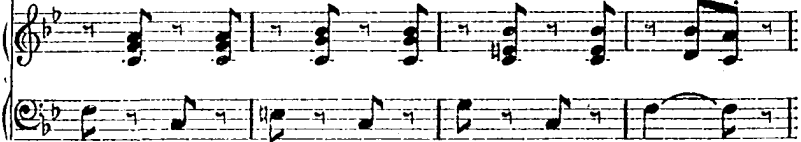
Piano.



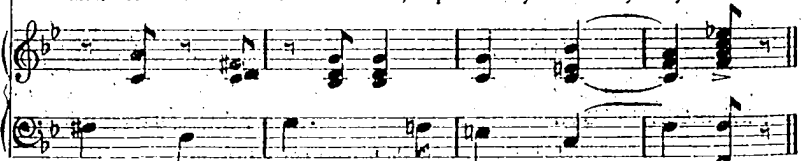
num-ber of young men I've got, Well, good-ness on-ly knows; When
prom-ised near-ly for-ty men That I will be their wife! Some
for a kiss they give to me No end of pret-ty things; When



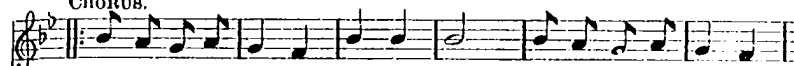
e'er I'm walk-ing in the street, I'm near-ly al-ways sure to meet A
fel-lows tell me that I am Their dar-ling, lov-ing lit-tle lamb, While
e'er they kiss me once or twice, Al-though by some ti's call'd a vice, I



young man who will call me sweet, And then so gent-ly say:
some call me their bit of jam, And oth-er fel-lows say:
must con-fess I think it nice, Espec-ial-ly when they say:



CHORUS.



Oh, you lit - tle dar - ling! I love you, Oh, you lit - tle dar - ling!

8va. in octaves. 2d time.



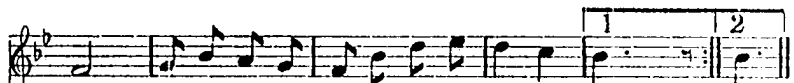
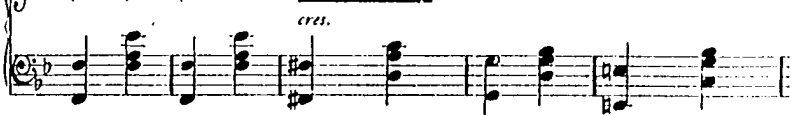
p 1st. ff 2d.



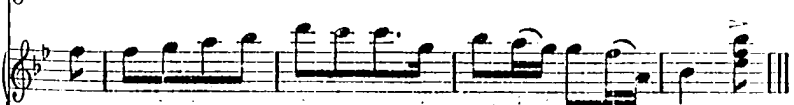
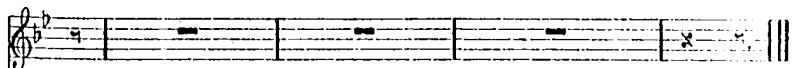
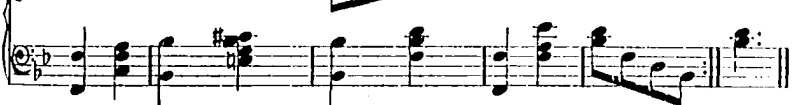
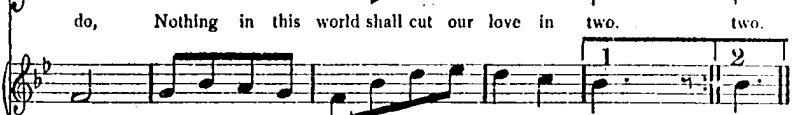
are you true? If you real - ly love me as you ought to



cres.



do, Nothing in this world shall cut our love in two. two.



SISTER DOROTHY.

BY EDGAR FAWCETT,

AUTHOR OF "AN AMBITIOUS WOMAN," "A GENTLEMAN OF LEISURE," ETC.

CONCLUDED FROM PAGE 335.

II.

It was past eleven o'clock, that evening, when Dorothy and her sister got back from the opera. Larchmont, who had gone out, had not yet returned. Dorothy kissed Sara at the door of the latter's apartment.

"Now, remember my advice," she whispered: "say nothing to irritate him. He won't insult you: he thinks that bad style. Let him talk as much as he pleases. But, as long as he reproaches you, keep as silent as you can, without seeming to be sulky. Wait for some sign of shame or self-rebuke, on his part. It won't come yet. It may not come for a good while; but wait for it. There: kiss me good-night, and keep a stout heart."

Scarcely had Dorothy begun to divest herself of her fineries, when she was joined by her mother.

"He is dreadfully angry," said Mrs. Truman. "He has had a long talk with your father."

"And what came of the talk?" asked Dorothy, quickly.

Mrs. Truman pressed both hands together, as though the act were a mild substitute for that more tragic one of wringing them.

"He said shockingly disagreeable things of you, my dear."

"Oh, did he?" replied Dorothy. "Well, I don't mind that, the least in the world."

"But your father minded it, Dorothy. He wouldn't hear you abused."

"Dear old papa!" said Dorothy, sinking into a chair, with a ruminative look on her face and a moist glitter in her dark eyes very much like that of tears. "Well, mamma, what happened?"

"Your father flared up as I have very seldom seen him do. Oh, he wouldn't stand it at all. Larchmont had to pull in his horns, I can tell you."

"I am glad to hear that," said Dorothy, with the humorous lines beginning to deepen about her mouth. "It is always a pleasure to hear that such a person as Larchmont has had to pull in his horns. Few other occurrences in life could affect me more agreeably. Was there an actual quarrel?"

"Something very like it. Larchmont wanted to take Sara away from this house."

"Of course he did. And I know papa wouldn't listen to that. He promised me, yesterday, on his sacred word, that he would not. Oh, what a lucky thing, mamma, that there was no settlement made upon Sara before marriage! I suppose Larchmont was ashamed to ask for one. But, if he had asked, there wouldn't have been the dimmest chance of a refusal, on papa's part, with the views he then held of his son-in-law, and with me—the right-hand 'man' of the family, as it were—off in Europe. Mr. Larchmont Bartlett could have snapped his fingers in our faces, then, and dragged Sara away with him. But, thank heaven, as matters stand, we still hold the purse-strings. *L'argent, c'est le nerf de la guerre!*"

The next day, Larchmont Bartlett did not take the slightest notice either of his wife or his wife's family. He breakfasted late, disappeared soon after breakfast, and did not return until everybody had retired for the night. For a full week, this daily routine continued precisely the same. Dorothy did not at all like such a course of proceedings; she would infinitely have preferred the warmest open warfare. But what dealt her more secret distress than she would have cared to own was the wistful imploring look which had crept so pathetically into her sister's gaze. The temptation felt by so many wronged women to submit—to bow their heads under the yoke, to accept from their lords and masters the lordship and mastery which mean injustice and imposition—was strong upon Sara Bartlett all through that week of trial. Dorothy knew this, knowing her sister's nature so well.

At length, Dorothy had made up her mind. She appeared in the breakfast-room, one morning, while her brother-in-law was seated before his coffee and buttered toast.

"Good-morning," she greeted him, with a gentle positiveness.

There was no answer on Larchmont's part, except a haughty flutter of the eyelids and a slight straightening of the neck.

Dorothy stood regarding him for a few seconds, and then she tranquilly said:

"I am sorry for you, if you really mean to insult me like that. For this is papa's house, you know, and I am his daughter; and you must either treat me civilly, or else leave it."

She saw his hand tremble now, as he tried indolently to toy with his coffee-spoon. And presently, in tones which had the cut of a blade and all its hardness, he said:

"If I leave it, my wife goes with me."

"I am afraid such a plan would be quite impracticable," said Dorothy, with an amiability that must have struck her hearer as the quintessence of satire.

"What do you mean?" asked Larchmont, rising from the table. His voice expressed both repulsion and disdain.

"I mean simply that papa would withdraw your allowance, if you left this house; and, if he did so, you, unless I am greatly mistaken, would find it impossible to support a wife."

This was a terrible shaft, and it told. Larchmont for a second grasped the back of his chair, as if to steady himself. He now fixed his eyes upon those of Dorothy, and said, in a measured voice, where the effort to repress open anger was something more than merely manifest:

"You have, I suppose, some sort of plan or purpose. What is it?"

"I can tell you in a very few words what it is," said Dorothy, with low-voiced directness.

"Very well. Do. I should like to hear it."

"Well, then, Larchmont Bartlett, it is this: I want to convince you that your attitude toward this family into which you have married is not only all wrong, but wholly untenable. You can not maintain it. You are not our superior, yet you assume to be. You are not the dictator, the polite tyrant of your wife, but her husband. As such, you should honestly conduct yourself. You do not do so at present. You are proud of what you term your birth and position. Give Sara the advantages of them. Show her, whom you have married, that you are not ashamed of her. Show us, with whom you live and who are her close kindred, that you are not ashamed of us."

He slowly nodded as Dorothy finished this little speech. His face looked as hard as marble, though he was slightly smiling. "How I hate that smile of his," thought Dorothy.

"Until you came back here," he said, in the same deliberate tone he had before used, "everything went well. You have brought discord and unhappiness into this house. All the present discomfort, difficulty, minute and yet discouraging annoyance, is attributable to yourself, and to yourself alone."

"Ah," softly exclaimed Dorothy, "you don't

know what a compliment you pay me! 'I found my parents and my sister bowing before a most relentless autocrat. Each of them, I regret to tell you, was burning in your worship a deferential little tripod, and you very complacently permitted the perfumed smoke to tickle and gratify your patrician nostrils. Well, I extinguished all three of the fires. You miss them, of course. But you must learn to do without them. They can never be lighted again. My dear young gentleman, you must permanently descend from your pedestal. When you consent to do so—when you allow that Sara and her parents are quite as good and quite as worthy of respect as you yourself, then they—and I likewise—will be willing to pay you all the respect and courtesy which will be your desert. Do you understand me? I have endeavored to make myself thoroughly plain."

"I will understand you better," said Larchmont, while he turned with a curling lip and walked toward the door of the breakfast-room, "when you have ceased all interference in matters which do not concern you, and matters in which it is unpardonable for you to meddle." After thus speaking, he passed at once from the room.

Dorothy's face flushed and then paled again, as she stood for some little time with drooped thoughtful eyes. But anger had nothing to do with this altering color. She began, on the contrary, to feel an actual terror for her sister's future. "But I will not flinch," she soon mentally determined. "With such a man, it would be downright defeat. And I mean victory—if I can possibly secure it."

Meanwhile, Mr. Truman, thoroughly incensed by Larchmont's behavior, and roused to a sense of regret for having permitted him so many past privileges, was chafing with a desire to tell his son-in-law that he must either conduct himself like one of the household or leave it forthwith. But, to everyone's surprise, Larchmont appeared that same evening, at dinner. He entered the dining-room at his wife's side. Sara's eyes shone a little feverishly, and there were two red spots in her cheeks. Larchmont bowed civilly enough to Mr. and Mrs. Truman, and then took his accustomed seat. The conversation languished dreadfully, though Dorothy did her best to lead it among unpersonal and non-committal grooves. Mr. Truman showed no signs of displeasure, as men are so apt not to do on just such trying and peculiar occasions; but Mrs. Truman, aggrieved by recent events, and having had her eyes opened to the folly of former court-paying to her son-in-law, made it repeatedly evident that she was not so easily to be propitiated. It was, no doubt, with a very distinct purpose that she said, after

Dorothy had made an allusion to the late cloudy and rainy weather:

"Yes, I hope next Thursday will be a bright day for our kettledrum."

Larchmont turned quickly and looked at his wife. "Kettledrum?" he repeated, as if involuntarily.

Sara's color changed a little. "Mamma and I have issued cards together for an afternoon-tea on Thursday next," she then said, in a quiet and clear voice.

"And whom have you invited?" asked Larchmont.

"Oh, a great many people," said Sara, looking at Dorothy with a nervous little laugh.

"Fortunately, we had all those cards to go by," said Dorothy, as if addressing her sister.

"You mean my friends' cards, I suppose," said Larchmont to his wife, faintly, while his face whitened.

"Your friends should be your wife's friends," here sternly but calmly broke in Mr. Truman. "If they are not, then you should disown them."

Larchmont met his father-in-law's look. "Is it customary for a wife to give an entertainment of this or of any sort," he asked, "without informing her husband of the intention?"

"That depends," retorted Mr. Truman, "upon whether the husband has spoken to or noticed his wife during a week past or not."

"I had just and proper reasons for not doing so," said Larchmont, icily. "Your daughter—Miss Dorothy—knows very well what they were."

"Indeed I do," said Dorothy, nonchalantly. "But, under the circumstances, I maintain that they were very far from being just or proper reasons."

A little silence followed. Larchmont had fixed his eyes on the table-cloth. He soon raised them, however, and said:

"I shall not be present at this affair."

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Truman, with an incensed nod of the head. "Then you may stay away."

Mr. Truman's face was very gloomy as he now spoke. "No, you may not stay away," he declared, looking straight at Larchmont.

"How, sir?" came the haughty question from his son-in-law.

Mr. Truman glanced about him, to make sure that no servant was present. He found that this was the case, and at once answered:

"You may not stay away, except on one condition."

"And that is—" drawled Larchmont, insolently.

"That you leave my house for good and all."

"Agreed," said Larchmont. He paused for a slight space, as if to watch the effect of this single unexpected word upon the faces of his auditors. "Yesterday," he went on, "I was what one might term a dependent—and bullied accordingly. To-day, I chanced to visit my uncle—Mr. Madison Abernethy—whose son was so unexpectedly killed, last month, in that railway-accident near Baltimore. My uncle, to my surprise, told me that, being now childless, he wished to adopt me as his heir. I hope you understand the significance of his proposition, which it is almost needless to say that I accepted." Here Larchmont rose, with what must be owned was a good deal of graceful dignity. "I repeat," he continued, "that I shall not appear at this entertainment next Thursday, no doubt given by my wife at the instigation of her most amiable sister. And afterward I shall take my wife from this house, to dwell elsewhere."

He walked leisurely away, after having finished these words. A look of alarm and consternation was on the face of Dorothy, now, as on the faces of her parents as well. No one spoke. Sara's eyes followed her husband's retiring figure.

"All is lost," shot through Dorothy's mind. "Fate has interfered, and I have failed!"

But now Sara rose from her seat. She turned slowly and faced her husband, who had also turned, on seeing her rise.

"If my father will let me stay with him, Larchmont," she said, "I will do so. You have not treated me as your equal here. How can I be sure that you would not make my life still more lonely and unhappy where you took me? Go, if you please, but I will remain."

"You shall remain, Sara!" cried her father, springing toward her and seizing her in his arms. "You shall stay with us always, if you choose. And let him dare, now your choice is made, to try and take you from us!"

Larchmont had grown almost livid. "Let her stay, then!" he almost shouted. "The law knows how to deal with a wife who deserts her husband. For myself, I wash my hands of the whole vulgar affair. You induced my wife to revolt against me, and then you thought to force from me a cringing sanction of this outrage. But—"

Here, a sharp cry from Dorothy cut him short. She had seen her sister's head fall sideways against her father's breast, and, before Mr. Truman himself had realized it, she knew that Sara had fainted.

In the confusion that followed, Larchmont

remained standing aloof, pale and a little scornful-looking. But his expression soon changed to one of solicitude, and he presently drew nearer the couch on which Sara had been laid. It was no mere ordinary fainting-spell. A convulsion succeeded it, and, before a quarter of an hour had elapsed, it was he himself who bore his wife, assisted by her father, to the bed-chamber upstairs. Then Dorothy, with a gleam of bitter trouble in her eyes, almost forced him and Mr. Truman from the room, saying:

"Oh, get Dr. Sandford at once, if you can. And, if you can't get him, bring any doctor you can find." And then a moan of pain sounded from the bed, mixed with a frightened exclamation on the part of Mrs. Truman. Both men understood, and withdrew, waiting in the hall. Already, not only Dr. Sandford, but two other physicians, dwelling nearer, had been sent for. And, in a few more minutes, one of them came.

At about ten o'clock, that evening, Dorothy, with a white scared face, came out into the hall and told her father and Larchmont that a dead child had been prematurely born, and that poor Sara's life hung almost by a thread. One of the doctors thought there was no hope whatever, and one differed a little from this decision, saying that a chance still existed. And then Dorothy, after pressing her father's hand in a tense excited way, slipped noiselessly back into the bed-chamber.

"My God, if she should die!" broke from Larchmont, a moment afterward.

Mr. Truman turned toward him and scanned his face. "Larchmont!" he said, in a kind of struggling whisper. That was all.

His son-in-law moved toward him and grasped his hand. And then these two men, so recently on the verge of a hard quarrel, told each other, by a silent eloquent mutual look, more than many sentences would have conveyed.

"Will you come into my sitting-room?" said Larchmont. And then he added: "Yours, I mean—not mine. It was yours first, and you gave it to me—among other of the many kindnesses you did for me."

"Not now, Larchmont," said Mr. Truman, very gently. "Go there yourself, and lie down; you may need rest before the night is over. Perhaps I will join you soon. I'm too nervous, now."

Larchmont went. He seated himself on one of the lounges, though he often started up and went to the door which opened on the hall where Mr. Truman still waited. And, at last, he saw Dorothy in the hall, talking, with whispers, to her father.

As he was about to advance, he saw that Dorothy was slowly gliding in his direction. She went straight past him, into the sitting-room, and he thought at first, as he followed her inside, that possibly she might have gone to seek some needful article which had been placed there.

But, when he had almost reached her side, Dorothy turned and looked at him. It had never occurred to him before that his wife's sister had the least traces of beauty. But it occurred to him now.

Her face was almost hueless; and, perhaps by some unconscious motion of the hands, repeated more than once in her acute worry, she had brushed the wavy hair far back from either temple, showing thus the full breadth and purity of her forehead. Beneath it, her dark-gray eyes were sparkling unwontedly; and, even before she began to speak, the sensitive quiver of her lips gave her mouth a touching sweetness.

"Sara is better," she said.

"Better?" he repeated. The light in the room seemed to brighten, as he heard that word of untold welcome. "Do you mean that she may live?"

"Yes," said Dorothy. "There has been a touch of delirium, and they feared the mania and dreadful fever which sometimes come, in such cases. But now the chances of those are very slight. She is quite rational. She has spoken to mamma and me, just like her old self, several times lately, and—and she has mentioned you."

"What did she say?" he asked, eagerly. A good deal of his elegant repose had vanished; the change was as much in his features, his carriage, his very gesture, somehow, as in his voice itself.

"She asked if you had heard about the poor little creature that was born dead," Dorothy murmured. Here her voice shook and broke; but she recovered herself promptly, and went on: "We told her 'Yes,' but that we thought your chief care was now for her, and that you would see her as soon as the doctors thought it best. That seemed to gladden her so. She closed her eyes, and kept them closed for some little while, smiling all the time."

"And may I see her to-night?"

Dorothy shook her head.

"No; the doctors forbid it positively. Tomorrow, they say, if she be no worse."

There followed a silence, here, and Dorothy took a step toward the table in the centre of the apartment, and let her fingers slip over the books and pamphlets there, leaning a little forward as though she were searching for some special one

of them. Her face and figure were turned half sideways by this action. But, suddenly, she faced Larchmont without a moment's warning. The tears were beaded on her lashes, and this made the laugh which at once left her lips appear to ring sadder than it really was.

"It—it seems so strange for us to be talking like this, doesn't it?" she faltered. "We've—we've fought so like cat and dog, since I came back home, you know. But I've been having very queer thoughts to-night, at poor Sara's bedside, and I made up my mind I would tell you what they were—provided you'd only listen. And then, when I spoke with papa in the hall, a little while ago, and he told me that you—you—were a good deal softened by Sara's illness and danger, I—I felt nearly certain you would listen."

"Say what you wish, Dorothy," said Larchmont, gently. It was the first time he had ever thus addressed her by her own name, and the girl started as she heard him do so.

"What I wanted to tell you was this: I may have been all wrong, in the way I looked upon your plan of life. I saw things from my own standpoint, and perhaps judged with too arbitrary a haste. I have clung to certain ideas, and cherished them for a long while past. But I would not have attempted to carry them out—to exploit them—if it had not been for Sara. I saw you drifting further and further away from her. It was then that I made the effort. But I may have been wrong in making it. So much that we do seems right, until we look fixedly at it with a dispassionate eye. And now, for everything that has seemed to you harsh, unfeeling, unfeminine, about my conduct, I ask your pardon. I—"

"No, no," Larchmont broke in. "That is too humiliating a surrender for you. Don't ask my pardon at all. I have no right to expect any such concession—no right. It is wonderful how much light can come from the shadow of a threatened loss—when it is the loss of one whom we love."

Dorothy hurried to him, and caught one of his hands in both her own, so pressing it while she searched his face. There was something at once wild and lovely in her act; it had the abandonment of a deep, earnest, and wholly candid joy.

"You did love her, then, Larchmont?" she said. "Oh, I always told her you did! And I love you for saying so now. Don't even hint to me that I have not been wrong. I was high-handed, imperative, uncompromising, from the first. I came home, and found you installed here 'en grand seigneur.' But who installed

you? My father and mother. You were proud, but they had made you prouder. I should have blamed them more, and you less. And yet, what almost tortured me was the thought that you were—were looking down upon poor Sara, your own wedded wife. It was that, and that only, which spurred me into my hostile behavior. Don't you believe this? I want you, ever so much, to believe it."

"I do believe it," said Larchmont, with a smile that was new to his lips, it gleamed so full of spontaneous kindness. "But, at the same time, your belligerence had another motive."

"What motive?" quickly asked Dorothy.

"Your social democracy. Oh, don't shrink away, as if you thought I meant one of my old sarcasms. I hope those are done, between you and me, forevermore."

"I hope so, Larchmont—I hope so, with all my soul," exclaimed Dorothy.

"You are a thorough-going republican, socially, my sister-in-law—and will be, till the day of your death. The 'I-am-better-than-you' form of thinking is something you were born with a detestation for. It's just as well that I should tell you now, plainly and frankly, that I am of the most opposite convictions—and will doubtless remain so, till the day of my death."

"Ah, indeed!" retorted Dorothy, with just a touch of her old rebellion, which leaped and faded in her manner like a dying flame, and was swiftly followed by an almost remorseful look. "Well, we'll have many a fight over our different convictions, in the future—shall we not? Good-natured fights, I mean. I shall be prepared to apologize, at an instant's notice, whenever my sharp tongue betrays me into the least real rudeness."

"But my convictions did not excuse me, in the course I took," persisted Larchmont, with the air of a man who is bent on setting himself right before his own conscience, at any cost of pride. "I entered this family with a totally wrong and arrogant feeling."

"You need not speak of that," murmured Dorothy. "I—I can understand perfectly just what you wish to say."

"You answer me thus, Dorothy Truman, because you have a very generous nature. It may occur to you that this change in me is sudden. But no: the real change had taken place many days ago. This is simply the breaking up of pride; and now you see what has lain underneath the ice of that pride. One is tempted to think that the great calamities which befall human beings are nearly always disguised blessings. I believe that, unless Sara had been thus

menaced, or unless she had actually died, I would never have bent my spirit to speak as I am speaking now—to alter my life as I intend hereafter that it shall be altered. Yes, I entered this family with the sense of conferring an obligation, rather than contracting one. I presumed to forget that my marriage with your sister made us indissolubly one. I clung to my prestige as a Bartlett—the merest myth and dream, you will call it; but, whether it was, and is, a myth and dream or no, I was shamefully at fault in not believing that she did not now possess it equally with myself. Sara never made the slightest revolt against my preposterous attitude; neither did her parents. I was conciliated, encouraged, instead of being summarily reprimanded and thwarted. Ah! that, after all, has been my chief reason for playing the snob and fool. When you returned home, I had taken the supercilious bent of all tolerated tyrants. You were a rebel, and I disapproved of you from the start. Tyrants always do that, with rebels.”

Dorothy clasped her hands, while her eyes, still tearful, beamed with a sort of penitent mirth.

“But I was a very impolitic, headstrong, and uncircumspect rebel,” she declared. “I went to work like—like a perfect Guy Fawkes!”

“Not at all,” denied Larchmont, answering her smile, though with one of gravity. “Don’t let your native generosity push you into self-justice. Dorothy. Guy Fawkes worked in the dark, and his cause was a bad one. You—”

“Oh, Larchmont,” she broke in, “remember that night when I took Sara to the opera! Wasn’t that working in the dark?”

“Is it possible that you accuse yourself like this?” he asked, scanning her flushed face with a curious gaze.

“Accuse myself?” cried Dorothy, plaintively. “Why, do you suppose I am going to stand here and let you do all the self-accusing? Not a bit of it! I won’t be made out a saint, when I am, in my way, as horrid a sinner as almost anybody. Why, what would you think of me, if—”

“I will tell you what I do think of you,” said Larchmont, with a deep tremor in his voice, drawing quite near to her and taking her hand,

just as she had taken his a few moments ago. “I think you one of the most noble and true women I have ever met. And, whatever happens hereafter, I mean to be your friend—your devoted, admiring, loyal friend!”

Those invitations for the Thursday kettledrum were necessarily recalled. Poor Sara’s sickness rendered that imperative. Her recovery, though sure, was gradual, and at times attended with painful relapses. But, long before her real convalescence had set in, Larchmont had proved no less the latent good and manliness of his character than he had brightened every member of the Truman household with something sweeter and more real than mere hope of reformation. And afterward the happy change continued.

He and Sara continued to dwell with the latter’s parents, but under conditions widely opposite from those which had before existed. Mr. and Mrs. Truman’s pride in him rapidly returned: for their foible was, after all, ineradicable. But, mixed with their pride, was now a hearty affection, and sometimes even a tender impulse at humility and self-effacement as well, which it took all Larchmont’s decision and resolution to repress and discountenance.

Dorothy still watches the new domestic code, as it were, with a grateful gladness that often bubbles up in the most joyous overflow of animal spirits. She and Larchmont have many of their proposed “good-natured fights,” but she is beginning to realize that he will remain as stanch a patrician till the end of the chapter as she will continue an unrelenting democrat.

“Some day, you will fall in love with a blue-blooded aristocrat,” Larchmont is fond of telling her. “I feel, Dorothy, that it is your fate.”

But Dorothy grimly and resolutely shakes her head at this baleful prophecy.

“If I loved him to distraction, and he got down on his knees to me,” she declares, “I should refuse him point-blank.”

“Ah, wait till he does,” teases Larchmont, mercilessly.

Dorothy sets her lips tight, then, as if to say: “Let him come. I am waiting.”

[THE END.]

THE NEWS FROM YORKTOWN.

BY MRS. MARY V. SPENCER.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 137.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was now the middle of September. Bryan had died about the middle of March, and six months had been considered, under the circumstances, sufficiently long to wait for the marriage.

Agincourt House, as we have seen, was full of guests. Cousins, and other near relations, with numerous friends, had crowded it, to its utmost capacity; all coming, in the true, old Virginia fashion, to assist at the ceremony. Even after Grace had retired, there were arrivals. Sir Peter Coales and his lady, detained by the casting of a horse's shoe, drove up, in their stately, old chariot, that had been in the family, since the reign of George I. The hospitable doors, flung wide open, welcomed them with floods of light: and light streamed from every bay and oriel. Within, the lively sound of violins greeted them, as they crossed the threshold. The elders sat, talking of the weddings they had been at, in their younger days, and deploring the falling off in the gaiety and splendor, with which they were now celebrated. The younger, more hopeful, or less critical, laughed at these gloomy views, and seemed disposed, at any rate, to make the most of the present moments. They gathered together, in the wide, deep hall, where a couple of the servants, who were fiddlers, struck up, after awhile, a Virginia reel. The two white-haired musicians were playing their best; the couples were racing up and down, wild with mirth and excitement; the old walls were trembling, to the dancers' feet; the elders, forgetting their vaticinations, were gathering around, and telling each other, that this was something like the old times; and crowds of dusky faces were looking in from the doors, at either end, with cries of "Hiaya!" "Dat's dancing!" "Give it 'em, uncle Jo!" when, suddenly, a horseman was heard, galloping up the drive in front, and directly after, he rushed wildly in.

"What's the matter, Dick?" cried a gentleman, who happened to be standing by the door, and who recognized, in the arrival, one of the bridegroom's favorite servants. "Why, boy, you're as white as a sheet."

"Mars' has been thrown, and mos' killed," was the breathless reply. "Doctor Grains don't say he die. But he shake his head, and look

like it. One t'ing sure, de weddin' hab to be put off. Dat sartain. Dem fiddles hab to shut up. Yes! come down from dar, uncle Jo'. Pore, lily Miss Grace, it mos' kill her."

A few words elicited the whole story, which was even more terrible than the messenger had first hinted. It seems, that his master had been recently breaking a wild filly, and that he had taken her out, that day, on returning from Agincourt House, and put her at a fence, which she had refused. He put her at it again, digging his spurs deep into her, angrily, until her sides ran with blood. She rose at it, under this punishment; but struck the top rail; and came down, with her rider under her. He was stunned by the fall. But, on being carried to the house, and put to bed, recovered consciousness, so that, when the doctor came, he was talking of getting up, and finishing his fight with the filly, by moonlight. "I was never foiled before, and won't be now. She shall do it, doctor," he said, with an oath, "or I'll shoot her, by the Lord."

The doctor looked grave, and made no reassuring answer; but proceeded to examine his patient. When he had finished, he looked graver still. In fact, he found that the spine was broken, and that the speaker had not forty-eight hours to live.

His extreme seriousness, struck the sick man.

"You don't look jolly about it," the latter said, affecting to be humorous. "Come, it's not so bad as your glum face hints."

"It couldn't well be worse."

"Couldn't be worse? What do you mean? You don't mean," with an oath, "I shall die?"

"While there is life, there is hope, is a maxim of our profession. But if you've any affairs to settle, you had better make sure, and settle them."

"Why, doctor, it can't be," cried the sick man, more in amazement, as yet, than in terror, however. "I won't believe it. I never, in some respects, felt better in my life. I haven't a bit of pain, or none to speak of, at least."

"I wish you had more pain, Jack," said the doctor, his voice quivering a little, and using the invalid's Christian name, just as he had, when the strong man was a child. "That's just it. I fear there's an injury to the spine."

"You mean I'll die?" with a startled look.

"But I can't die. I won't die." He fairly shrieked now, his eyes wide with terror. "Why, I was to be married, to-morrow. And I'm not thirty yet. I ought to have fifty years of life before me. My great-grandfather, Agincourt, didn't die till he was eighty. Look here, doctor, I won't stand on money. You fellows say you can do everything. Save my life, and I'll pay you what you like: you shall have one of my plantations, and any number of darkies." His wild offers increased, as the doctor shook his head, and his voice rose sharper, until it became a scream. "I won't die, I tell you. Oh! my God!"

Between rage and terror, he choked for words; but his strained eyes were still fixed imploringly on the doctor. All his life, he had had his own way, in everything. He had but to ask, even for what seemed impossible, and it came. He could not understand, that anything could defy him, not even death itself.

It was a terrible scene. The old physician remained with him, for hours, striving to soothe him. Now he raved at his hard destiny, the hardest ever man had, he said. Now he cursed. Now he wept, and wrung his hands. Would nothing save him? Could pharmacy furnish no cure for a case like his? Must he really die, and within two days, and all because of that cursed filly? He wished he had shot her; she should be shot before another hour; where were his lazy hounds of servants, that they did not shoot the huzzy, at once?

Early the next day, the doctor returned, and found his patient more composed. Even cowards become reconciled, at last, to the inevitable, or, at least, grow stolid with despair. Jack held out his hand, with a faint smile, as the physician came in. Ah! was it, that something, even more than a sense of the inevitable, more than the stupefaction of despair, was at work within him? Did the old knightly spirit of his race leap out, from the embers, in which a brutish and besotted life had almost extinguished it? Or was it better still—was it that the softening influence of approaching death, the shadow of God's everlasting mercy—was already melting the selfish heart?

"I've been thinking a good deal, as I lay here," he said, "and begin to wonder, if, after all, Bryan hasn't been wiser than I, and whether it isn't better to die, fighting for what we think right, even if mistakenly, than to go down, in this way, like an ox under a butcher's axe. The Agincourts have died in battle, often enough, merely for an idea; but they died grandly; and I'm dying like a brute."

"Jack," said the old doctor, "Jack, there's one thing I'd like to know, and that's all about your quarrel with young Aylesbury."

"Well, what about it?" he replied. He spoke quickly and surlily. But the doctor noticed he averted his eye.

"You always said, Aylesbury began that quarrel, Jack. Now, I've known you both, since you were babies, and I don't believe it."

"Don't believe it?" He glanced up, furtively.

"Aylesbury was always peaceful, the last one to provoke a quarrel," said the doctor. "Besides, your uncle Guy had been very kind to him; the lad was going away; it was natural, he should wish to leave on good terms with all; while you, Jack—you—well, you know what you were."

The sick man made no reply; but went on picking at the coverlet. His hand trembled, visibly, however, and, once or twice, he stole a furtive glance at the doctor.

"I can understand," resumed the latter, after a pause, "that, in the first moments of irritation, you may have said more than you meant, and that, afterwards, you did not like to take back your words. But, if I was you, I wouldn't go out of the world, with a lie on my soul."

"A lie! That's strong language, doctor. And to a helpless man, who can't resent it." But, angrily as he spoke, he did not dare to look the doctor in the face.

"I'm an old friend, Jack," the doctor said, "and use a strong word, because, it seems to me, you hardly realize what you've done. You were speaking, just now, of the Agincourts, who died in battle, for God and king. Do you think any of those old heroes would have gone out of the world, with a falsehood on his conscience?"

"No, they wouldn't," said the sick man, suddenly. "It's a mean thing to do, and I won't do it."

Then he told his hearer how it all had happened. How he had insulted Aylesbury, hoping to provoke him to take the offensive; and how, when all had failed, he had tried to strike him with his whip, and, finally, had drawn on him.

"I was mad with jealousy, you see. But I've been sorry for it often, since then." He spoke almost with a whimper, poor fellow. "I have, indeed, doctor, though you don't believe it."

"I do believe it, Jack," replied the doctor, pressing his hand. "And this is an honorable, noble thing, you are now doing."

"I tried to drown my feelings. But drinking, rioting, nothing was any good. That's what's been the matter with me, doctor, this last year. No, I won't die, with a lie on my soul."

He ceased speaking, here, and closed his eyes,

as if fatigued, and seemed to sink into sleep, for awhile. Ten minutes, or so, later, he opened them again.

"You really believe I'm dying, doctor?" he asked, incredulously. "Let me tell you, I think you're mistaken. I haven't a bit of pain. Seems to me, I never felt better in my life."

He closed his eyes again, with a languid air, and dozed off, once more; and never opened them; for he fell into a stupor, and so died, at daybreak, the next morning.

CHAPTER IX.

SOME three weeks after the funeral, Doctor Grains mounted his mare, and rode over to Agincourt House. Up to this time, he had said nothing of Jack's confession. "I will not trouble his uncle, as yet," he told himself. "My old friend is utterly broken down; we must give him time to recuperate. Besides, Aylesbury is away, and nothing could come of it, just now."

But this morning, a crisp, cool one, in the first week of October, the doctor heard news, which would no longer permit him to delay. Accordingly, he set out for the Hall, where he asked to see its owner, alone.

"God bless me," said Mr. Agincourt, "is that you, doctor? How you startled me! I really believe I have had a nap. It's dull work for an old man, who no longer cares to hunt, and with these dreadful times, and such sorrows—"

The doctor waited for a moment, in sympathy with the old man's grief, taking his hand, and pressing it, kindly. Then he said:

"I have not intruded before, my old friend, because I respected your grief. Poor, poor Bryan! And even Jack. In the grave, we forget everything, and though Jack was hardly an Agincourt, only one in name, in fact, yet he had lived with you so much, that you must have felt even his loss keenly."

"Yes! I think that I am his heir, instead of his being mine, as I once thought so probable."

"Man proposes, but God disposes, my dear, old friend," replied the physician. "It is about Jack, that I have come to see you. Do you remember his quarrel with young Aylesbury?"

"Yes. But what of that?"

"A good deal," replied the doctor. "Listen!" And then he told his story.

The old man, in hearing it, was roused from his apathy. Before the doctor had finished, he had started from his chair, and was walking up and down the room, in a state of ever-increasing excitement.

"Gracious heaven!" he cried, when the speaker stopped, "how unjust I have been. To

think of it! But I was prejudiced, that was it. I see it all now. And the letter the young fellow wrote! That explained all, no doubt. Ah! what have I done? Was ever an Agincourt guilty of such dishonor before?"

"What letter?"

His hearer had quite overlooked the presence of a listener. He colored now, even through his wrinkled and tanned face.

"Ah, I forgot you did not know," he said. "I've a confession to make. Don't quite despise me, old friend. But Aylesbury sent a letter to Grace, an hour or two after the affray, and I—I tore it up."

"Without her seeing it?"

"Without her seeing it."

"And all this time, for more than a year, the young man has been under the belief, that his explanation was received, and disbelieved; nay! treated with contempt."

"It is even so. Heaven forgive me!"

"I never credited Jack's story, but I little dreamed of such injustice as this."

"I take shame to myself," replied the other. "I have done a great wrong. But no true Agincourt ever hesitated to make reparation, when he had once discovered his error. Even poor Jack, you see, did it." The tears were in his eyes. "Nor will I hesitate? I wonder where Aylesbury is."

"I heard, only this morning, and that is what brought me here. He has come South, with Washington, and is now before Yorktown, where we, that is, the Continentals, have cooped up Cornwallis."

"Then I will go, at once," replied the other, ignoring the reference to Cornwallis. "I will only wait till my mare is saddled. It is not so long a journey."

"Stay," interposed the doctor. "You forget the difficulties. How are you to make your way inside the lines? Remember, you are more than suspected of disaffection; you may be arrested as a spy; and not even your position, or your gray hairs, would save you. Washington is just, but he is stern. Think of André's fate."

"What, what," stammered his host, rising, angrily. "Arrest me for a spy? Me, who remember this Washington of yours, when he was only a poor, young land-surveyor. What would he have been, I ask you, if he hadn't married the widow Custis?"

"As for that," said the doctor, "a Washington has as proud a lineage as an Agincourt. They were Normans, as even you must admit, of the best stock; and money is of secondary consideration, as I've often heard you say, when a

man has blue blood in his veins. Washington would have risen, let me tell you, whether he had married a rich woman, or a poor one; it is in the man; Virginia has had many brave and able sons, but never one his equal."

"For all that," retorted Mr. Agincourt, stopping in his walk, and facing the doctor, "they say, the widow Custis hen-pecks him."

"Well, well," replied the physician, "we won't quarrel. We all know the widow Custis. You royalists, I suppose, must have your fling. But this is not business. Let us return to our subject. Be guided by me; my dear, old friend. Write, as I have said, to Aylesbury. I will see that the letter is forwarded."

His host hesitated for awhile longer; but the doctor finally prevailed: and Mr. Agincourt sat down to compose the epistle. This was no easy matter; for the old man was not accustomed to much correspondence, and this, besides, was a peculiarly delicate affair. The letter was couched in the formal and somewhat high-flown language of that day; and was not innocent, we are glad to record, of more than one solecism in grammar; while only about a dozen words were misspelled. But this was no rare thing, at that time. Even men and women, of the highest rank, were guilty of these errors, a century ago. Mr. Agincourt's epistle, in spite of these faults, however, was a straightforward and honorable one; and, in that respect, it was, probably, above the average of our less punctilious generation.

The missive found our hero in the trenches at Yorktown. We shall not attempt to describe his feelings. He had already heard of the death of Jack. But he had not expected this justification. On the contrary, he had said to himself, that, now that his rival was gone, all hope was over of ever being rehabilitated in Grace's eyes. "He only could have set me right," Aylesbury had said, "and he has died, and made no sign. She is as far from me as ever." The contents of Mr. Agincourt's letter, therefore, were as surprising as they were gratifying. In an instant, all nature assumed a different aspect to the young man: the skies grew bluer, the sun shone more brightly, the waters of the York flashed by like burnished silver. Doctor Grains had feared that Aylesbury would remember only the terrible injustice done to him, and, especially, the suppression of his note of explanation; and so, might make an angry rejoinder. "Perhaps, he is cured, by this time, of his fancy for Grace," thought the physician. "If so, he will have his revenge now; most men would; and it will be sweet to him."

But the good doctor little knew his old *protegee*.

Aylesbury wrote, immediately; "in a great hurry," as he said; and as, indeed, was the truth. Important events were in progress, connected with the siege, he continued, or else he would have replied in person; but it was impossible for him to leave his post, that day; to-morrow, he would endeavor to do so. Meantime, might he be allowed to say, he had always looked forward to his justification, sooner or later? In writing this, he exaggerated, as we know; but he wished to spare the feelings of an old man; and shall we be the first to condemn him? "In a couple of days, at latest," he wrote, in conclusion, "I shall be at liberty, and shall hasten to pay my respects at Agincourt House. Pray, make my kindest remembrances to Mrs. Agincourt, whose many kindnesses to me, I shall always cherish, among my dearest recollections. May I hope, also, that I have not been quite forgotten by your daughter? In all these weary months, I have never ceased to look back, on the days spent at Agincourt House, as the happiest of my life." He did not venture to be more explicit; but he hoped that these words would reveal to Grace, who might, probably, read between the lines, the fidelity, as well as strength of his attachment. "Ah! if I could only tell her," he said, as he folded the epistle, "that I have thought of her all the while, and have never, never, ceased to love her."

CHAPTER X.

Non was Aylesbury mistaken, in this supposition. When Grace heard the letter read, she knew that the writer still loved her, notwithstanding the injustice which he had suffered. The death of her cousin had been a terrible shock to her, naturally. But, after the first few days, she could not help feeling a sensation of relief. The tragedy, sudden and awful as it was, had saved her from a life of misery, a life that would have been but little better than a living grave. Nature, in time, asserted her rights. The strain of this impending doom once removed, her spirits recovered themselves, and with them her health. Another fact helped on this restoration. Her father, as she knew, was her cousin's heir, and this relieved him from all fear of ruin. The home of his ancestors, Agincourt House, was safe. In reality, Mr. Agincourt was richer than he had ever been: the richest proprietor, perhaps, in all broad Virginia.

By-and-by, her thoughts turned to Aylesbury. She knew, as yet, nothing of her cousin's confession. But something within her told her that he must have been the most to blame. Often, and often, during the past year, she had

canvassed the matter over. Often, she had said to herself, that she had been unjust to Aylesbury. She had put this thought away, when she decided to marry her cousin; but it now returned to her; and returned, again and again. Yet how explain his silence? Why had he never made any effort to see her, to write to her, even? When she was told, towards the latter part of September, that Washington had arrived in Virginia, and, soon after, that the allied forces had shut Cornwallis up in Yorktown, she wondered if Aylesbury was with the army, or had been left, with some of the troops, in the North. Not hearing anything from him, or even of him, she concluded that he had not come South. Involuntarily, she sighed. For, deep down in her heart, a hope had re-awakened, which this conclusion now crushed again. "He has forgotten me, he despises me," she said. "He has, probably, asked to be detailed elsewhere, so as to avoid even being in my vicinity." All this time, remember, she was ignorant, that Aylesbury had written to her, and that her father had suppressed the letter.

But when the doctor came, and made his revelation, when she heard, in the same hour, of her cousin's treachery, and her parent's cruelty, she almost, for a moment, lost her reason. "Oh! what must he think of me," she cried, clasping her hands to her forehead, and recalling the injustice, the insults, even, which Aylesbury had suffered. "Never, never, will he forgive me. Nor ought he to do it. We have sinned, past all hope. All these long months, yes! for a year or more, he has been treated as a murderer; when, as even Jack admitted at last, he tried his best to avoid a conflict. Was ever such atrocity? Oh! my love, my love, if I could win forgiveness, by going down on my knees to you, if, for only one moment, you would smile on me, and say you pardoned me, I would be willing never to see your face again. But that will never be. Poor papa, he did it for the best; but he has destroyed my happiness, forever. I thought a life, wedded to my cousin, would be only a living death; but this is more horrible: I must live on, year after year, knowing how cruel I have been, and that there is no hope of forgiveness."

Her mother was the first to comfort her. She divined the thoughts of Grace, and after telling her of Mr. Agincourt's letter to Aylesbury, took the most cheerful view of the future.

"He always loved you," she said, "and will, as you will see, hasten to come here. Keep up your spirits, dear. All will go well."

"Do you really think so, darling mamma?" said Grace, nestling close to her. "Really think so? Oh! if he will only forgive me."

"Poor, dear child! To think how you have suffered," said her mother, stroking Grace's hair. "But it is all over, now. I always, dear, did like Aylesbury better than your cousin Jack."

That was all that was said about the now dead cousin, nor was any reference ever made to Mrs. Agincourt's former advocacy of his suit. But the mother and daughter talked long into the night, mingling their tears together. Before they retired, too, came Aylesbury's letter; and this filled them with gladness. They could talk of nothing but his magnanimity.

"Do you think, mother, dear," said Grace, at last, blushing, and half averting her face, as she rose to go to her own room, "do you think there would be anything wrong, if I put off this mourning garb, for a day? If he really comes to-morrow, as he writes he will, I shouldn't like to meet—him—for the first time, in black. It may be a foolish superstition; but you will let me wear white, won't you, dear?"

"Certainly, my love, and I hope to see you wear it, in due time, as a bride," said Mrs. Agincourt, as she kissed, once more, her departing child, now blushing rosier than ever.

Our readers, all of whom, we doubt not, are familiar with the history of that period, know that the aspect of the war had changed greatly within a few months. They will, therefore, understand the allusions we have made to the siege of Yorktown. General Greene, though defeated in his attempt to rescue the South, had made such a gallant fight, and had conducted so masterly a retreat, that the results were almost a victory. Cornwallis, in following him, had been drawn so far from his base, that he had determined to establish a new one in Virginia, hoping, eventually, to hold that colony, in addition to the Carolinas. But no sooner had he fortified himself, for this purpose, at Yorktown, than the eagle eye of Washington saw his chance. The French fleet had now arrived in American waters, and was supreme, for the time. Its presence, if it could be brought to the mouth of the James, would, he reasoned, prevent the British earl from being reinforced by sea. Meantime, if the American army could be rapidly moved, from New Jersey to Yorktown, a net would be drawn around Cornwallis, from which it would be impossible for him to escape in time. The plan was no sooner conceived, than it was put in execution, and now, ever since the middle of September, the allied forces, French and American, had been besieging the royal army. Hence, the presence of Aylesbury, so near to his old home, which the doctor had finally ascertained.

The morning dawned bright and beautiful; one

of those golden days that are only seen in October, and then only in America. Grace had been too happy to have slept much ; but she was too happy to show fatigue. She was up be-times, and came down to breakfast, dressed in virgin white, looking indescribably beautiful.

They sat down to breakfast, but Grace could hardly eat, and could not sit still. She was listening, evidently, for the first sounds of an arrival.

"I think I hear the gallop of a horse—yes," she said, starting up, just as breakfast was over, "I am sure of it. Come, mamma, dear. Come!" They all rose, and hurried to the great hall-door, Mrs. Agincourt and Grace leading. Two or three young ladies, from neighboring plantations, friends of Grace, who were on a visit at Agincourt House, followed. Mr. Agincourt, walking more slowly, brought up the rear.

They reached the hall-door, and there, emerging from the avenue, was an officer, in the white livery of France, leading a horse, without a rider. He drew up, just in front of the terrace.

"It—it is Hector—Mr. Aylesbury's favorite horse," cried Grace. "He used to ride it, every day. But what can it mean? What can it mean?"

She broke from her mother's side, and would have rushed down the steps, to interrogate the horseman; herself.

But her mother held her back.

"He is dead—I know he is," cried Grace, "the empty saddle."

As she spoke, the French officer dismounted, and throwing the reins of both horses to an orderly, who had followed close behind, looked up, and gravely saluted the group at the hall-door. Then, taking a letter from the breast-pocket of his coat, he advanced, sorrowfully, and with downcast eyes.

Before he could reach the terrace-steps, however, a succession of shrieks was heard, from the rear of the hall ; and Grace's colored maid came rushing up, her eyes dilated with horror. The news, in some inexplicable way, travelling, perhaps, from mouth to mouth, had reached the kitchen-servants, even before the riderless horse was seen ; and it was this intelligence which now burst from the frightened lips of the girl.

"Oh ! Miss Grace, oh ! Ma'm Agincourt, Mars' Philip's dead," she cried, gasping the words out. "De Lord help us, and hab mercy on our pore souls. Dey 'saulted de batteries, and Mars' Philip fell dead, sure 'nuf, at de foot of de ramparts. And oh ! dar's his horse ; I knows it, I does. Oh Lord, oh Lord—"

What more she said, no one remembered, for Grace had sunk back, into her mother's arms, lifeless.

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]

THE PHAETON OF LAMPASAS.

BY HOWARD SEELY, AUTHOR OF "A NYMPH OF THE WEST," "A RANCHMAN'S STORIES," ETC., ETC.



HE was tall, angular, and lantern-jawed. He was a bilious man—withal an unhappy-looking man—as if his daily life were rendered disheartening by a painful and monotonous campaign

against his daily liver. He was a fluent blasphe-mer, and, as we rode along, he beguiled the reticence of his usual manner by flashes of profanity, addressed to his horses, of so brilliant and startling a character as to fill the casual listener with awe. He wore a suit of clothes that had evidently once been black, but had been bleached and faded by the sun into that peculiar moss-green color that impresses the observer in rural districts with the odd fancy that some old forest-rock has capriciously taken it upon itself to go masquerading. He also wore long boots, that invariably accumulated upon sole and upper so much of the soil of the State that they increased and heightened this archaic resemblance. And of his use of tobacco, it may be said that he distilled the weed incessantly, in pensive contemplation of the axle. Such was "Bel-ton Joe," driver of the daily stage between Belton and Lampasas.

I had been sitting beside him on the front seat, lost in awful admiration of this persistent baptism and the general accuracy of his expectoration. There was perhaps nothing significant in this wayside pleas-antry, but it impressed me peculiarly: as if it were the characteristic outbreak of some gently humorous nature that uniformly hid itself beneath a pensive and forlorn exterior.

I said to him: "My friend, you seem to be out of spirits—not feeling well, perhaps—or, it may be, suffering from a trifling indigestion; let me offer you a cigar. It's a brand that I think I can recommend."

He took the cigar, but his reply was a little startling. In fact, the details of his

conversation, while they were picturesque, were so generally unfit for publication that I feel I shall experience difficulty, during this narrative, in affording the reader an adequate idea of his character. I venture to say, however, that, in a few terse sentences, he called heaven, earth, and the under-world to witness that my anxiety in regard to his health was entirely unsolicited. He addressed me as "Stranger."

I said to him: "My name is Howe—Faye Howe. I object to being called 'Stranger.'"

"Oh, ye do!" he rejoined. "Well, Howe, my early bloomer, I'll remember it. Got a match?" taking a large quid of "natural leaf" from his mouth, and disclosing by the act a dental spectacle of great loneliness and eccentricity, as he shied the tobacco at the ear of the off horse.

I handed him my match-safe, inwardly rejoicing that he was becoming more communicative.

"I suppose this is a hard life of yours," I said; "attended with danger, hardship, and all that sort of thing."

"You bet!" he said, shortly.

"Liable to be run away with, too, I suppose," I ventured.

He turned half round, looking at me very gravely, and then winked three several times with great deliberation.

"See thet critter?" he said, indicating the horse whose ears he had lately favored with his marksmanship. "Well, 'tain't three months ago yit that thet blarsted old skee-sicks allowed to git away with me, right in Lampasas, just as the 'Sentinel' was goin' to press, and half the town had turned out to see a bride and groom I fetched over from Belton for their honey-moonin'. I'd jest landed 'em at the Cosmopolitan Hotel, when one of them divilish brats o' Johnson's, celebratin' for Krissmiss, an' seein' the ole mare was skittish, let off a cracker back o' her hind hoof. Lord love ye! ef ye'd ha' seen the coach—runnin' on the two off

wheels all the way to the blacksmith's shop, a-crampin' and a-circlin'—and me half pulled over the dash-board an' hangin' to my hosses. I froze to 'em, stranger—I mean, Howe—I growed fast to them hosses! Dad burn yer ole hide!" he soliloquized, as the off mare snorted and puffed, apparently encouraged by the recital of her exploits, "dad burn ye! ye remembers it, I dessay. When I got to the outskirts of the town, the hull village o' Lampasas was a-fallowin' me, reckonin' to kerry me hum in installments. But they didn't know Belton Joe—no, sir! I lost a spoke or two at the mill, the tire o' the hind wheel kem off by Johnson's, an' I made the last lap runnin' on sticks; but I fetched 'em afore I got through. They took the pole, whiffle-trees, and the two forrard wheels with 'em finally, but they took me! I hanged to 'em! Why, stranger, I wouldn't ha' let go them hosses ef they'd pulled me apart. Ez it was, my left shoulder went on a strike, an' I sprained my back some; but sho! I stopped the dad-gasted idgits. I run 'em inter the river, an' like to drownded the hull bizness—myself inter the bargain. The editor of the 'Sentinel'—he's chuck full o' his college nonsense—an' he sed, in his paper, there hedn't been no sich ride ez thet sence Faytun allowed to larn the old man how to drive. Dern me! ef he don't call me 'Faytun' every time he sots eyes onto me now. Wot sorter gruel is he ladlin' out to me, anyway?"

I laughed and recounted that rash youth's experience with the "Chariot of the Sun." He was intensely interested in the narrative and followed me closely.

"Hold on! hold on!" he shouted, as I progressed; "why don't the dad-burned idgit put on the brake when he's goin' down-grade? Ain't he got none?"

When I had finished at length with the lamented decease of the unfortunate charioteer, he drew a long breath and drove on solidly for some moments in silence.

It was a gloomy spot. On either side, the dwarfed growth of live-oak and mesquite covered sparsely the prairie-bottom. Great pools of water lay at intervals, here and there overflowing the road in sloughs of viscous mire. The embers of some teamster's bivouac now and then were strewn along the road, and the monotonous stock-bell of straying cattle smote the air occasionally. Large

flocks of duck and wild fowl rose from the roadside as we drove along.

"Wal," Joe said at length, "I'm sorry for thet young feller. He hed sand—oodles of it; but he didn't know how to drive—eh?"

Without waiting for me to reply, he went on: "Yes, yes—don't I know all about it? Ain't I seen lots o' them ammytoor drivers? An' the wust of it is, thar ain't no larnin' 'em anythin'. They don't seem to onderstand thet drivin' is a bizness, jest the same as anythin' else; an', while they're a-holdin' the lines, they're a-whistlin' and a-dreamin'—half the time, they ain't in the coach at all: they're back in town, moonin' over some gal or 'nother, an' bimeby thar's an earthquake, and the hosses gits to runnin', an' them fellers gin'rally chucks 'em the ribbons and gits out the hind end o' the coach. An' then the coach is convarted into reasonable good fire-wood; the passengers goes into the hospital and sues for damages, and the kempeny swears and wonders why it is the route don't pay expenses. This feller didn't, though. He was the right sort. Durn me! ef I ain't sorry I wasn't alongside o' him on thet thar box, jest to gin him a few p'int's and sorter see him through—eh?"

I assented in some amusement at his earnestness.

"How was politics along back?" he suddenly asked.

"Back in Belton, you mean?" I inquired. "The't is it."

"Pretty lively. They were getting ready for Sheriff-election and county judge. I can't understand what anyone can find worth running for in the office of Sheriff."

"Sho!" said Joe, looking at me under his brows; "think of the excitement! Ye never know what yer goin' to git. It's jes' like—jes' like"—pausing for an appropriate simile—"like undertakin' to drive a team o' Missouri mules hitched to a light buggy. It may be as peaceful and hevingly ez an April day, and then agin a blue 'norther' in the middle o' summer mightn't be a sarcumstance. Then, think o' the old scores ye kin pay up. Thar's four or five fellers on this yer road who hev stood me up on this box here, with a six-shooter to my head, time in agin, while they cut up the mail-bags with their bowie-knives and went through the passengers."

A groan from the solitary couple who occupied the interior of the coach.

"Ye needn't take on in thar!" said Joe, putting his head in the window; "they've quit this road sence the Rangers took to regulatin' this deestrick."

"All the same," he resumed, turning to me, "thar's about half a dozen o' them road-agints I'd like to git the drop on, with a right smart possey; ef I wouldn't make 'em palp, my name ain't Belton Joe—thet's all!"

"Who air they runnin'?" he suddenly asked.

"Natchez, for county judge; for Sheriff—I didn't learn. What kind of a man is Natchez—any use?"

Joe threw away the stump of his cigar, shifted his reins into his right hand, spat twice emphatically upon the whiffle-tree, and said: "Use? Any use? Look a-here, stranger—I mean, Howe—whar on airth hev you been?"

I replied that I was simply traveling through Texas, and asked for information merely.

"I should reckon so!" Joe rejoined. "Wal, you better take a day off, and larn suthin'. The narviest, grittiest, smartest, and best-lookin' chap in the hull State. Lord love ye! man, whar ye bin? Use? Wal, now, thar ain't no smarter lawyer nor better feller in the hull Lone Star—bet yer life!"

I lamented my ignorance.

"He's got a darter," Joe continued. "Hev you ever met Penelope—Penelope Natchez? No? Wal, wal, you better lengthen thet day off o' your'n, and not remain any longer in degradin' ignorance. Thar is a gal!" said Joe, looking around in breathless admiration; "a gal ez I don't mind sayin' thet I banks on consid'able—the prettiest and trimmest little filly ye ever see. I ain't the only one thet thinks so, nuther. And ther ain't nothin' she can't do: ride hossback, rope a runnin' steer, shoot a pistol, drive—Lord! she could ha' given thet young Faytun p'int. Thar ain't no end to her cuteness. I was down to a ball at Brady City, along back—a temperance ball, I believe they called it; but, from what I see of the wind-up of thet ball, the feller thet named it must have been in a sarcastic frame of mind. Howsomever, that was after the ladies hed gone hum, and ain't nuthin' to do with it. But Penelope's dancin'! Durn me! ef I didn't set thar like a bump on a log, I was thet

kerried away by her style and her pretty paces. It's lucky," concluded Joe, with a half-sigh, "I reckon it's lucky for my peace o' mind thet I'm barred out of the matrimonial race, on account of age and growin' infirmities; fur, ef it was a free-fur-all, I'm afraid I'd want to enter with the younger colts for the sweepstakes, and, bein' handicapped jes' now with a game shoulder and a sprained back, I'd naturally git left."

After the above eulogy, my regret that it had never as yet been my privilege to encounter this frontier paragon was absolutely poignant. I said as much to Joe, and was again commiserated.

"But you don't know who they're runnin' for Sheriff?"

"No."

"How are things in Lampasas?" I inquired, later.

"Bad," said Joe, with sulphurous qualification of the adjective; "ruined by progress. They expect to have a railroad there soon; busts any Texas town—cleans out the stage-bizness. Gets the folks stuck up and full o' airs; it's begun already."

"How so?"

"Humph!" said Joe. "Thar's Zeb Younger—see the workin' of it onto him. Zeb made his pile brandin' cattle, ropin' steers, and burrin' sheep. Took advantage of the rise in land, 'count of the G. C. & S. F. road, an' sold his ranch fur buildin'-lots. Wot's the result?"

"Well, what?" said I.

"Useter be satisfied with rawhide and red flannen and long boots. Now wears b'iled shirts, sellyloid collars, an' low-quartered shoes. Went down to Austin a spell ago, an' come back with a hard-boiled hat!" replied Joe, in deep disgust.

"A Derby?" I suggested.

"Yes, I reckon," returned Joe, with a sneer. "His women-folks hev got the same idee. Now, I ain't got nothin' to say 'bout women-folks. Thet's their natur, jes' the same as war-paint for an Injun, or high-heeled boots and strap-bands for a cow-boy; but I've knowed Zeb now, off and on, a dozen years—eat, cooked, and slept with him—drinked, smoked, and swapped lies. I reckoned he hed more sense."

Joe sighed and took a bite off a plug of "natural leaf" for consolation.

"Invited me up to dinner, last trip," he

continued. "Humph! Hed them cane-bottomed cheers at the dinner-table—useter be nail-kags, in old times. Mames Younger met me on the front gallery, an' shook hands with me with kid gloves on—long ones, layin' in streaks along her arms, like they didn't fit nohow more'n ef ye stuck yer hand in a boot; calls 'em—wot's this?—oh! muskeeters! Zeb kem out with thet hard-boiled hat on sideways, druv on his head ez ef he'd been born 'in it, smokin' a segyar. Ugh!"

I overlooked the allusion to the cigar.

"Come in to dinner, Mister Flint," sez Mames; 'hope ye'll excoose our plain fare.' 'I don't reckon,' sez I, kinder sociable-like an' keerless, 'ez I ever found fault with the grub at this ranch.' I larfed an' winked at Zeb. He drewed hisself up like a ramrod and sez: 'Mrs. Younger will be down presently; she's attending to the culenary arrangements at present.' 'The doose ye say!' sez I, tryin' to appear at home. Ye see, it useter be the 'ole woman,' and 'when ye goin' to feed?' 'Mary,' sez Zeb, 'you must overlook Mister Flint's—wot's this?—iddyosneecrazies'; yes, thet was the word—'ye must overlook Mister Flint's iddy-os-neecrazies; he's so much on the road.'

"Thet riled me. 'I reckon no one need give me any p'int's how to act afore gals,' I sez; 'I knows 'em and admires 'em.' Zeb shut up; thet fetched him.

"We went in to dinner. Wot do you reckon they hed for dinner?" said Joe, turning half round.

I suggested "buffalo," knowing the scarcity of the viand.

"Napkins!" said Joe, with a grimace; "act'ly, napkins—starched stiff, an' sot round at every place. I knowed wot he meant then 'bout 'culenary arrangements.' I didn't say nothin'; but, when I sot down, I jes' put thet yer white bib one side—I never like to give women-folks any more washin' than necessary, an' I knowed I'd sp'ile it. I whips out my red bandanner han'kerchief, and spread her out in my lap. I'd been kerryin' it fur some time, an' I wasn't afraid of it. Little Younger—'bout ten years old—he snickers right out, an' I sez: 'Oh! I knows wot yer larfin' at, young feller; it's 'cause I don't use my napkin. Ye needn't be so fresh; I knows wot they are—I've seen 'em afore; but I never was the kind of a man

to give women-folks any extry trouble. It's bad enough to hev to wash plates. I've been thar!"

"Then I smiles over at Mrs. Younger, sorter consid'rate, you know. Wot do ye reckon she done? She draws herself up an' sez: 'Mister Joseph Flint, I'll hev ye to understan';' sez she, 'thet we're able to hire our washin' done,' sez she, 'an' we don't care to hev no one here who don't conform,' sez she.

"Pick yer napkin up, Johnny,' sez she; 'pick it up, my son—never mind his impudence.' Ye see, he fired his onto the floor when I give him thet."

Joe looked at me attentively, to see whether I grasped his facts.

"Thar warn't nothin' I enjoyed at thet dinner," he continued, "'cept the shampagne; an' thet wasn't named right, nuther, judgin' by the pain in my head the next day. I hed to stick it into the hoss-trough, till I could get my hat on, to start back on the down coach. But Lord love ye! it was all of a piece: Lace curtains on my bed; crazy quilts—they made me crazy. I drug the bed-clothes off, an' slept on the floor. Tooth-brushes—extry ones for visitors, on the wash-stand; towels, starched stiff—all alike! They hed a cuss-the-door, or suthin', for me, at the head of the bed—'fraid o' their carpet. I opened the winder, and used thet. I cussed thet way! I don't go thar again in a hurry."

"Why, my friend," said I, "this is a campaign against all modern improvements. What you are finding fault with, I miss exceedingly. They seem to think I'm a curiosity because I want to read after I go to bed, and request a light in my room. Back in Belton, the nigger brought me up something that I thought was a torpedo and slow-match. I poured the contents of the water-pitcher over it, and turned in at once."

"Yes," said Joe, "I heern all about thet. The editor hed an editorial on it. It was all over town the next day. They call thet lamp the 'Silent Mary'—it's somewhar between a bull's-eye lantern and a carbine. It's like thet off mare: to look at her keerless, you might say she was a cross between a night-mare and a clothes-hoss; but, ef ye git in range of them hind feet o' hers when she's subjeck to depression of sperrits, ye might be indooxed to change yer mind."

"Joe," I said, extending my hand, "shake! You're wasting your time down here. You ought to live North, where people would appreciate you. You'd be worth considerable to some of those writers, as a character-sketch. Now I think of it, I doubt if Dickens himself would have passed you over."

"I wanten know!" he said, incredulously. "Wal, I hev'n't any use for none of yer writers. Thar's no trustin' 'em. Ye tell 'em suthin' in confidence, an', the fust thing ye know, it comes out in the papers or a book, and then it's a ches'nut. They're allus goin' round, takin' p'int's an' spottin' fellers, the editor tells me."

"Are you pretty good at keepin' your mouth shut?" he asked, suddenly, glancing at me sharply from under his shaggy brows. "Ef I thought ye wouldn't give me away, I'd tell you suthin'. Or are you one of the kind thet's allus unloadin' all ye know to the next feller ye meet?"

Thus challenged in regard to my powers of secrecy, I drew a modest parallel between myself and a combination safe.

"Hold up your hands!" said Joe, dubiously.

I started at the ominous phrase; he unconsciously adopted the road-agents' formula.

"You solemnly swear!" said Joe.

I did.

"All right." Then, sinking his voice to a mysterious whisper: "I was born in New York—I'm a Northerner!"

"What?" said I, in amazement.

"Sure!"

"Hold on, my friend!" said I, incredulously. "How about these Southern phrases, pronunciations, etc.?"

"Never mind," said Joe; "I'm a curious cuss, an' wot I hear round me sticks somehow. How do ye reckon I knowed you was a Northerner?"

"I don't know," I replied, frankly.

"Wal, ye talk better, an' ye look slicker an' more like a sport, than the rest of us."

"Joe," said I, "this is treason; you're a traitor—"

"Thar, that'll do! about traitor," he said, with sudden warmth. "Thet's plumb plenty o' thet. It's a fightin'-word, stranger!" shifting his reins so as to leave his right arm free.

I apologized hurriedly, abjectly. It was weak in me; but Joe's brawny fist clenched, and—I apologized.

"Very well—drop thet; anythin' but thet."

"So you've lived North?" I said. "Shake again!" I was anxious to bridge over the late affront.

"Yes," said Joe, smiling, "lived there—lessee: nigh onto twenty years; but thet's twenty years ago, too."

He stopped, looked me searchingly in the face, then took out his plug of tobacco, bit off a piece, and ruminated as we rode along.

"Them hills and vales!" he said, abruptly, throwing his head back and closing his eyes dreamily. "I kin see 'em jest as ef 'twas yestiddy. Them mountings and meadows! Thet Hudson River, a-sparklin' like a silver mirror in the sun. Sho! they think, down here, they've got scenery. I hev to laugh sometimes, ridin' along an' thinkin' to myself; but I sez nothin'. Why, they don't know what landscapes is; all up and down, rollin' like the sea, or flatter'n a flapjack! Northerners git wild and enthusiastic about our hangin' moss an' live-oaks, grass all the year, horned toads, and so forth; they're well enough, but wot are they to the red and yaller, the flamin' leaves and glowin' color of nature's forges?"

"Well, well," I said, "I didn't suppose there was so much poetry in your composition, Joe."

"Thet ain't mine," said Joe, hastily, as if he had forgotten himself and owed me an apology; "I read it somewhar, an', like other things, it sticks. But I hope you realize it."

"Realize it?" I said. "Why, of course I realize it. I live at Hastings, right on the Hudson, and I agree with Irving—'one's life cannot but be influenced for the better by the noble river that flows so calmly and serenely by one's very door.'"

"Yes," said Joe, "Wash was some pumpkins, and he writ right smart, and all he hed to say took hold. Now, jes' look at what he said about the oak and the vine—comparin' it to a woman! I never was married, but Lord! ain't thet the size of it? I've seen fellers all broke up in bizness, and startin' out fur Brimstoneville, with their trunks checked through, an' some gal hez kem along, kivered up their faults and losses, and clung to 'em so—dern me! ef they didn't lose the train."

I accepted Joe's mixed figure, and acknowledged the justice of his observations.

"How long hev you been in the State?" he inquired, abruptly, glancing at me.

"About a year, off and on."

"Whar ye bound now?"

"For Abilene."

"Goin' North?"

"Sooner or later—yes."

"Look a-here, stranger—I mean, Howe: I rather like your style. I'm sorry ye're goin' to quit the kentry."

I thanked him.

"It ain't very likely I should see much of you, Joe, if I staid here all my life."

"Can't tell," said Joe; "might meet ye occasionally, ye know. I don't reckon to follow this dog's life allus; can't tell. Be you goin' to stop in Lampasas over-night?"

"Yes."

"Are you too high-toned to kem over to my shanty and take supper with me? Ye see, I kinder cotton to you, an' I'd like to talk over things an' show ye suthin'. We've got about a mile further to go."

I accepted his hospitality at once.

Joe said very little, after this. He drew his reins tight and whipped up his horses; night was coming on. I had not given the team credit for half the speed they now displayed; but I noticed that Joe chewed viciously and expectorated violently for the rest of the route, and the off mare became singularly gamesome as these symptoms developed.

He was a hard driver, and, when we drew up at the Cosmopolitan Hotel, the horses were steaming so they looked like an animated fog.

"All out!" said Joe.

The bewildered couple in the interior tumbled on the platform, somewhat discomposed by their jolting journey.

"G'lang! ye ole cavortin' steer!" ejaculated Joe, apostrophizing the off mare, as he drove away. He turned into a cross-road, whipped up smartly, and suddenly brought the shaky coach, with a clatter and a bang, to an abrupt stand-still before a small house and stable. Harness and hame-straps were hanging from various pegs; a large hound sprang fawning upon him as he opened the door.

"Down, Pomp!" he cried. "Now, Mr. Howe, jes' lend a hand here, ef ye will, and we'll git some corn into them hosses. Chuck the harness down anywhere. Bob'll tend to

all thet, ef he ain't too drunk over the result of the elections. He's gone down to the railroad-shanty, about a mile below here, to get the returns; they've got a line 'twixt here and Belton now. Bob—that's my brother—hez got a friend runnin' this canvass, I believe; thet's wot he tells me. Wal, thet'll do. Jest hold them doors while I put the post in. Thar! Now we'll go in to supper."

We went in to supper, and it was an excellent one. I record the fact, since events of that nature are not monotonous in the Lone Star State. It was cooked by Amelia, a Creole cook, who also waited on us, and, after supper, mixed two cock-tails that I remember to this day.

Oh, Amelia, ebony dispenser of nectar to an exhausted spirit! I stay my pen to reverent memory, as I recall the fiendish beverages that were elsewhere proffered me in that unregenerate State.

"Come in here," said Joe, rising reluctantly from the table when we had drained our glasses. "Here's where I hang out."

We entered a small ground-floor room. The walls were hung with old clothing, "slickers," and whips. There was a gayly-colored lithograph representing the arrival of a stage-coach, at a 2.40 gait, before a palatial hotel in the Southern country. The artist's imagination had evidently exceeded his facts.

"Now," said Joe, stooping down in front of an old blue chest, "what I say and show to ye goes no furdur, remember! This ain't no nonsense, mind; and I reckon it'd bust me higher'n a kite, ef the boys caught on."

He opened the chest. He took therefrom an officer's sword, a pair of shoulder-straps and a sword-belt, a soldier's cap, and the coat and trousers of an old and faded uniform.

"Thet's all I've got left," he said. "I hed an overcoat; but I wore it out during some cold northers up in Kansas, afore I kem to Texas."

"Do you mean to tell me," I said, in amazement, "that you have served as an officer in the Union army?"

"Sartin!" said Joe; "but the boys don't know it, and, wot's more, I don't want 'em to. I reckon it'd bust me. Here," he continued, reaching into the trunk and taking therefrom a discolored parchment, "thar's my commission. It was this way: We were down in Arkensaw, jest outside Little Rock,

lyin' in our rifle-pits. We hed a rampart o' cotton bales near a strip o' woods, and, on the edge o' this woods, there was an old deserted house. The enemy kem out o' thet woods, bright and early one morning, and there was a pretty lively skirmish for more than an hour, and some mighty hot firin' on both sides. At last, a party of 'em got in the old house, and the rest retired into the woods. The fellers in thet old house made it a leetle uncomfortable for us; bein' so posted, ye see, thet they could sorter rake us sideways. But the point of it was this: They allowed to set fire to thet rampart, and then attack us from all sides at once, and jest naturally cut us to pieces. They tried all they knew how to set fire to thet thar rampart—throwin' bombs and sech; but they couldn't quite come it. No one dared run out and fire it, for it was sartin death. There were good shots among us, and, ef anyone hed made a break for them bales, he'd got thet entire attention of every musket in the regiment. The day wore on, and it was drawin' toward night. At last, one feller, a young officer—a tall handsome feller he was, too—kem a-tearin' out from behind thet house, mounted on a black hoss, and flourishin' a blazin' torch. He clapped his spurs into thet hoss, and went thunderin' down our lines, flyin' like the wind, and leanin' over in his stirrups, and tryin' to light the bales as he went. My God! to see the courage of thet young feller, and the bullets goin' sping! sping! from every gun we had! I reckon thet man knowed he hed to die, an' jes' delib'ately took his life in his hand. But I tell you, pardner, it was the grandest sight I ever saw—the bravery of thet chap, facin' sartin death and single-handed! It seemed a pity to kill him. I seen more'n one man ketch his breath afore he pulled on him. Wal, it was all over in a few seconds. All at once, hoss and man went down together; he struck the ground right in front of me. Ye'll hardly believe it; but, riddled with bullets ez thet man was, he raised himself on one hand, and, with his last gasp, jabbed thet flarin' torch right into thet cotton, and fell thar and died with it still in his hand. The bale caught fire and blazed up at once.

"I don't know how I ever kem to do it," said Joe, glancing at me with a wild gleam in his eyes; "but, before I knowed what I was really doin', I hed jumped over thet rampart,

yanked off my coat, and beat and stamped thet fire out. I was back agin before you could count ten, but the bullets whizzed lively! Talk about Washington and Wellington sayin' 'there's music in it'! There is! But ye can count me out from any sech music. See here: I kep' thet coat I wore thet day, somehow. Ye ken see they cut it up some. There's one hole thet might hev fetched me. It seemed like a miracle arterward, but I got off sound.

"I don't know, arter all," said Joe, with the instinct of true heroism and drawing a long breath, "I don't know ez it was so dre'dful much to do, arter all. War's war, an' a man must take his chances; an', ez I say, it was done afore I thought it over. But the boys made a big time; and the colonel reported it, and I was made captain. Thar's the letter thet promoted me.

"Thet's all," concluded Joe, putting in the articles carefully one by one, and locking up the chest. "Not much, p'raps; but I hev to be mighty skeery o' sich relics, down here. An' somehow, pardner, when I git to thinkin' over old army-days—ye see, I've hed to wrastle and take it jest ez it kem, sence I was a boy—with no wife to sorter smooth things when it's all up-grade and rough goin'—no little kids to meet me at the gate, to romp with me and love me—things thet warm a man's heart an' make him hold hard and take a fresh grip, when he's willin' to chuck up the reins—I hain't none o' them—an' somehow, pardner, I set a heap o' store by them old traps and all they calls up. But I reckon I wouldn't be any too likely to git ahead down here, ef the boys ever knew I fought agin 'em. They allow I'm Southern-born. I never told 'em to the contrary."

We went out on the front gallery. There was a man coming in the gate, with unsteady steps, but visibly overjoyed at something he had to communicate.

"Hooroar! hooroar! Joe, old boy, git out the dimmyjohn, and call out Amelia. You've got to set 'em up!"

"Why, what's the news?" inquired Joe, nervously.

"News?" said the other. "News? Why, you're Sheriff of Belton—thet's the news!"

"Sheriff? Belton?" said I, in amazement. "Why, who was running?"

"I reckon," said Joe, smiling, "I reckon it's me. Amelia, bring out the glasses!"

THE SACRIFICE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE VALLEY FARM."

I.

"Come hither, my child," said a feeble voice.

A young female, in the bloom of early womanhood, emerged from the shadow of the curtains and stood at the bedside.

She was one whom, once seen, was not soon forgotten. The face of Anne Malcolm was inexpressibly beautiful, but with the loveliness of a pure soul, not of mere physical contour. The dove-like eyes and the winning smile declared her to be one peculiarly formed for confidence and affection; but the broad brow and the decided mouth bore testimony that, with all this, there was nothing of weakness in her character. She was one to love only the noble and worthy; but, having chosen, to be inflexible.

"What is it, mother?" she said.

Her voice was low and sweet, but firm, just such a voice as might have been expected from her countenance.

The invalid lifted her eyes faintly, and a pang, as of mental anguish, passed across her face: then she spoke.

"I am dying, Anne," she said. "You know it?"

The daughter's mouth quivered, and a big tear gathered in her eye; but she made a violent effort, and conquered these outward manifestations of grief. Seeing that her parent waited a reply, she bent her head slowly in acquiescence, accompanying the gesture, however, with a look of the divinest love.

"You will grant me one favor," said the dying woman, "will you not, Anne?"

The daughter still answered not in words, but her large eyes, distended in surprise, were fixed on the mother's face in rebuke and inquiry.

It is a serious thing I am about to ask of you," continued the invalid, "a great, a very great sacrifice!" She paused a moment, and, with her gaze intensely fixed on Anne, added, brokenly, "your brothers and sisters—when I am gone they will have none to take care of them—oh! my child, can I ask you to be to them a mother, to care for their bodily health, to train them to righteousness? Your father, immersed in business, cannot do this aright: he is a man, too, and knows not the mysteries of a child's soul as a woman does. Say you will do this and I will die in peace."

The invalid, in her eagerness, had half risen

in bed, and grasping Anne's hand, gazed earnestly up into her face.

Over that face had passed many changes even during the brief interval while Mrs. Malcolm spoke. At first a look of unutterable agony had been there; then a heroic resolution succeeded; next, her glance, for one moment, had been raised to heaven as if she prayed inwardly; and now, as the mother ceased, a holy light beamed forth from those dove-like eyes, penetrating to the very depths of the dying woman's soul, as dew falls upon and refreshes the parched earth.

"I promise," she said, in a firm, but sad voice, retaining the pressure of her mother's hand. "With God for my help, I promise to be to them a second mother!"

The invalid's eyes gushed with tears, and she raised her look to heaven.

"Father of mercies, I thank thee," she said. "In this child, which I have labored to bring up to please thee, thou hast bestowed on me a treasure. Forgive me if I have asked of her too great a sacrifice! Oh! may the consciousness of this noble act of self-denial—this yielding of love to duty—sustain her when she comes to an hour like this, and bear her up through the waters of the dark river."

Big tears were now silently rolling down the cheeks of the daughter. It had not been without a severe pang that she had given the promise her mother had exacted of her. Plighted with the full consent of both her parents, to one whom she loved with all the devotion of a first affection, Anne beheld, in thus undertaking to be a mother to her brothers and sisters, the inevitable frustration of all her hopes: and she saw that her parent considered it in the same light also. There had been, therefore, a momentary struggle between duty and love; but only a momentary one. Anne, with the exception of an older married sister, was the eldest of the family, and she knew that, if she refused, the dear old household must be broken up. It was not merely this, however, that she dreaded, it was the consequences that would flow from it. Deprived of a proper home education, who could tell the evil courses that her brothers and sisters might imbibe! A moment she had hesitated; but then came the resolution to make the sacrifice. Oh! woman, thou constant martyr to duty, what secret sacrifices of thy dearest hopes the day of judgment

will reveal. Patriots dying on the scaffold, are made immortal for the momentary pang they endure; but woman, whose heart the world breaks on its wheel forever, suffers and lingers on, yet none call her blessed. But the angel forgets her not—thank God for that!

II.

Mrs. MALCOLM, having finished her broken prayer, turned again to her daughter. Anne had hastily wiped the tears from her eyes, resolute, in her heroism, to conceal the full extent of her sacrifice.

"Call the family," said the dying woman, faintly, for her late emotion had terribly exhausted her. "The light grows dim—I am going."

Anne rushed to the mantel-piece and violently pulled the bell: then she hastened to the window, which she threw up. Retiring to the bedside, she found her mother gasping for breath, in a paroxysm of her disease, which was consumption. Supporting the invalid in her arms, so as to elevate the head, Anne tenderly fanned her; and, while thus doing, the family came into the room.

There were seven of them, beside the father, seven children, all younger than Anne; and even in that hour, she could not help shuddering at the responsibility she had assumed. And yet she did not, even for an instant, regret it.

When the dying woman became easier, she turned, with a sweet smile—oh! how like the smile of Anne—to her husband and said,

"James—the hour has come—you see I am dying. This dear child," and she glanced up at Anne, "has promised to fill my place to our motherless babes, and you will, I know, assist her, as far as you can, in her holy task. I am weak now, and cannot speak much. Come, one by one, and kiss me. Oh! do not weep. God bless you all."

When the sad, tearful procession, to each one of which she addressed some word of comfort or admonition, had filed by, she turned to Anne and said,

"And now, my love, one last request! Let all remain in the room, while you read me the fifteenth chapter of Corinthians. I would hear its cheering words once more before I die."

The daughter tenderly surrendered her mother's head to the husband and father, went to the little table where lay the family Bible, and began in a firm, sweet voice, to read. As she proceeded, frequent sobs broke from the rest, even from Mr. Malcolm, but with the self-control of her high character, she continued composed to the last. The glorious promises of inspiration seemed gradually, moreover to kindle her soul

into enthusiasm, until her eye kindled, her cheek glowed, and her tones became triumphant even at that bed of death.

"So also is the resurrection of the dead," she read. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body."

The countenance of the dying mother, as these words fell from the daughter's lips, became rapt like that of a saint: especially when the reader reached the passage,

"Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality."

The eyes of the dying woman were fixed above, her hands were clasped, her lips moved in prayer; and her countenance, as if from some inward light, oh! with what a glory it seemed radiating.

Anne read on.

"So when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written. Death is swallowed up in victory. Oh! death, where is thy sting? Oh! grave where is thy victory."

I wish you could have heard the triumphant, the almost exulting tone in which the daughter read these words, her countenance the while beaming with the lofty inspiration of her theme.

She paused an instant before she proceeded. But now a voice from the bed took up the holy text. It was a voice so clear, so full, so loud that it seemed impossible to be that of the dying saint; and all turned, with astonishment, not unmixed with awe, toward the couch.

And yet it was the voice of the mother. Half sitting up in bed, as if in the full possession of her strength again, she looked now radiantly lovely: the glow on her cheek, the light in her eyes, the rapture of her face were indescribably beautiful!

"Oh! death where is thy sting? oh! grave where is thy victory," she repeated, triumphantly; and then with a fervor of gratitude that no words can paint, she added, "thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

It was the voice of a saint winging for heaven.

The burst of rapture had scarcely left her lips, before she fell back as if fainting, and, ere she reached the pillow, she was dead.

Yes! even at the moment that the husband, feeling the dull weight of a corpse in his arms, reverently laid the body down, the disembodied spirit, we may well believe, was already before the great white throne.

So, when our hour arrives, may we all die!

III.

AND now the time had come when Anne Malcolm was to fulfil the promise she had made at her mother's death-bed. The arrangements of the funeral, the endeavor to assuage her father's terrible grief, and other imperative duties had prevented her, hitherto, from writing to her lover; but the time had come when this could no longer be deferred.

She sat down accordingly to her little table and essayed to write. But when she thought of all she was about to give up, she could not go on: tears rained on the paper; and, at last, completely unnerved, she rose, threw on a shawl, and went out to seek, by a walk in the open air, strength and resolution.

For she was making no ordinary sacrifice, in surrendering the hand of her plighted husband. Frederick Vernon was already, at twenty-five, fast rising into eminence as a physician, in the great city to which he had removed on receiving his diploma, with the heroic resolution to aim at once at success where success was most difficult, and, therefore, most honorable. From earliest childhood Anne had known Frederick. When she was a little girl but seven years old, and he a lad of fourteen, he had been her constant attendant, climbing the rocks to pull the flowers of the clematis, and wading into the lake to gather the whitest of the water lilies for her. When he came home from college at twenty-one, Anne was just fourteen; and the acquaintance, neglected since childhood, was now renewed. Two years later, during a visit of the young physician to his parents, this acquaintance changed into an intimacy; and that, finally, into a mutual love. The affection, therefore, that existed between Anne and Frederick was no sudden and illusory passion, the growth of a morbid imagination; but a profound sentiment, based on the fullest knowledge of each others character, and strengthened by an entire conviction that their sympathies were such as to render a union happy and wise. The marriage had been arranged to take place when Anne was eighteen, but the declining health of her mother had caused it to be put off. And now an impenetrable barrier had been forever raised against its consummation! Yet such is life.

It was a breezy, autumn day when Anne left the house, and as she passed down the gravel-walk to the gate, the dead leaves, from the trees in the little lawn, were whirled in myriads around

her path. She reached the turnpike, and leaving the house on the left, ascended the long hill which here bounded the village of —. When, at last, she reached the top of the acclivity, a landscape, many miles in extent, dotted with farms—in summer bright with golden grain, but now covered with russet brown—stretched before her eyes; while the breeze, fresh from the north-west, in the direction of the valley, swept cold and powerful across her cheek. Far away in the distance was the old farm-house, where my own childhood had been spent: and, close at hand, the venerable church-yard where my ancestors had been laid. Here also, under the walls of the grey old building, the mother of Anne slept; and to this spot she directed her steps.

A walk of a mile and more brought her finally to the grave-yard. It stood, close by an ancient wood, a little off from the high road, fenced in with dilapidated palings. A dozen hoary sycamores, now entirely leafless, and whose white branches, like skeleton bones, rattled in the wind, stood sentinel over the crowded tombs below; for the cemetery had been in use during a century and a half, and numerous generations of a populous district were laid there. Many of the graves had long since sunk in; over others the green stones tottered to a fall; and, in several places, the huge brick tombs, with the marble slab covered with armorial bearings, such as our forefathers in their pride erected, were tumbling to ruins. In one corner of the yard stood the church, an antiquated structure, built in a style long since out of date, and with bricks imported from England. Through the shutterless windows a view could be had of the cold, inhospitable interior, with the tall pews and the brick floor; but the half dilapidated old place was dear to Anne, as to me, because there, in our earliest childhood, we had first learned to worship a Creator.

The scene suited the melancholy of Anne's present feelings. Other considerations, however, had called her here. She wished to pray by the grave of her mother, and there gather strength to consummate her sacrifice. For never, for a single instant, did she think of re-calling her promise, but only of preparing herself to execute her task.

When, at last, she rose from her knees, it was with renewed courage, and even with something like peace of mind. The long walk, through the bracing air, had invigorated her physical frame, as she had expected, and this assisted to calm her spirit, and strengthen her nerves. For Anne well knew that the body was subject to the laws of nature; and hence instead of weakly giving up to depression, she rallied her powers constantly against it, employing all the means she could command to maintain her health and spirits, so

that she might the better be able to go through with the duties of life: Brave, wise girl!

It seemed to her, as she turned for a last look at the old church-yard, that even the hoary sycamores waved with a cheerful sound, so great was the change in her own heart. The sun, too, shone brighter, in her eyes, than when she had set out. And so, when she returned to her little parlor, it was with a firm hand that she wrote to Frederick his dismissal.

IV.

SHE told him, at once, that they could never marry, frankly assigning the cause, both because it was due to him, and because it would cut off all hope. The youngest of her sisters was but three years old, and, until this child had grown to woman's estate, Anne considered herself, she said, bound by her promise. She wrote kindly; in every line indeed her affection was perceptible; but she wrote also with a calmness that showed how firm she was. One or two tears, toward the close, dropped on the letter; and her signature was a little flurried; but that was all.

V.

Two days after, Frederick appeared at Mr. Malcolm's. He had come down immediately on receiving her letter, not waiting even to visit his patients, but sending a hurried note to a brother physician to take his place.

He entered the house without announcing himself, for he feared that Anne might deny herself to him, and he was determined to see her, in order to try the effect of a personal interview. He knew her well enough to be convinced that no mere letter could move her. He trusted, however, to surprise her out of herself, by his passionate appeals, by his representations that she owed a duty to him as well as to her family. He had yet to learn how inflexible she was, in the path of right, even against the pleadings of her own heart.

Anne had dreaded this conduct on the part of her lover. She was aware of his energetic mode of action; she knew also his eloquence, at least over her; and she had resolved, as Frederick feared, to refuse to see him.

But when she beheld him before her, and read his purpose in his countenance, she determined no longer to fly the danger, but bravely to meet it.

Frederick was the first to speak. He held her letter open in his hand, and he was terribly agitated.

"Can you mean this, Anne?" he began, as he took her proffered hand.

A faint, sad smile came over Anne's face, as she replied,

"Sit down, dear Frederick, and be calm. You

know me well, enough to be certain that I mean it."

He looked at her at first incredulously, then with pain, and finally almost in anger. She met his eye, through all these changes of mood, without flinching, with the same half beseeching, half reproachful, but ever deeply sorrowful gaze.

"You cannot be so cruel," at last he said. "Duty! Do you owe no duty to me? Oh! Anne, Anne, you are doing a great wrong, under the name and belief of a duty. If you persist in thus casting me off, you will be the cause of my ruin."

He really felt all that he said. He was more impulsive than Anne, and, in the horror of losing her forever, he believed, at the moment, that life would be valueless to him.

The tears came into Anne's eyes. In spite of his injustice, she loved him too well not to feel hurt; and she replied, making an effort, however, to control herself,

"No, Frederick," she said, "it is not cruel, nor am I deceived. Do not think I have not maturely considered the subject, or imagine that my decision has been without pain to me. But, though I owe a duty to you, I owe a greater one to these motherless children, whose destiny, both for this life and the next, perhaps, depends on my accepting the trust delegated to me. I am a poor, weak girl, I know; but this burden has been laid upon me; and I trust that my heavenly Father will give me the wisdom and strength necessary to discharge the task. It is cruel in you, Frederick, indeed, indeed it is," she said, with streaming eyes, "to endeavor to persuade me selfishly to abandon my duty, and neglect this motherless family."

Frederick was inexpressibly touched. His generous heart felt already that he had been wrong, and he loved Anne the better for her noble sacrifice. He had been walking, in agitation, up and down the room, while she spoke: he now stopped opposite to her, and exclaimed,

"You are an angel, Anne! Forgive my selfish petulance. But," he added, after tenderly regarding her for a moment of silence, "do not insist on breaking off our engagement! I will wait for you, though it may be years."

Anne's resolution was almost shaken by this proposal. But she reflected that, before her trust would be over, she would have long passed the season of youth; and her generous heart could not consent to keep Frederick waiting for her. The sacrifice must be complete, not a half-way one. So she answered,

"No, Frederick, I cannot consent to take advantage of your noble heart. I cannot agree to keep you waiting, till long after the prime of life, subject to the many circumstances which

may arise entirely to forbid our union. Better meet the inevitable fate at once. Our paths of duty lie clear before us."

Frederick made no immediate reply. He was again traversing the parlor with rapid and excited steps. Men, even the best of them, are more selfish than women; and he could not fully comprehend this martyr-like heroism of Anne. He began to believe, what he had at first suspected, that the charge of her mother's children was not the only reason why Anne desired to break the engagement. He answered under the influence of these feelings, stopping angrily before her.

"You do not love me, Anne, or you would not speak thus. Oh! if your affection was like mine, you would be content to wait for a life-time."

The color mounted to Anne's cheeks. Pure, and noble, and self-sacrificing as she was, Anne had yet the feelings of a woman, and a high-spirited one too. Injustice, though it pained her when coming from those she loved, did not the less render her indignant. Once before, during this interview, Frederick had been unjust to her; and she had then conquered herself sufficiently to expostulate with him. But she could do so no longer. She rose proudly, therefore, as if to terminate the interview.

"I did not expect to meet reproach, at least from you," she said. "But since it has come to this, the sooner we part the better."

Frederick had not looked for this. He was stunned at the consequences of his words, but neither her language nor her manner entirely removed his suspicions: he, therefore, made no

retraction, offered no apology, but stood regarding her, half coldly, half angrily.

Reader, we are not weaving a mere romance, but telling a story of the hard realities of life. Our characters are not, therefore, perfect. They are such as actually once lived, and sinned, and suffered: and we must describe them as we knew them.

So they stood regarding each other, for the space of a minute, he with a gloomy brow, she with haughty indignation. Then each, seeing that there was no relenting in the other, turned away.

The next moment Anne was alone.

She flung herself now on the sofa in an agony of tears. All her pride had deserted her.

"Oh!" she cried, "this is more than I can bear. To part in anger!—could I think it would come to this? Father in heaven," she cried, lifting her eyes above, "let me have strength to drink this cup, for it is bitter, bitter indeed."

Suddenly she thought she heard a step in the hall. She started up, with a fluttering heart, thinking Frederick might be returning. But the step passed on, and she recognized it now as that of her father.

She turned involuntarily, after this, toward the window. The form of her lover, at that instant, emerged from the gate on the highway; and, without a single look backward, he passed down the road.

"And thus we part forever!" cried Anne, sobbing afresh.

It is a terrible thing, sometimes, to walk in the way of duty.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THE SACRIFICE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE VALLEY FARM."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 84.

XII.

WINTER had come again, and now Anne was at liberty to accept the often repeated invitation, of her cousins in the city, to visit them.

It was not without a beating heart that she saw the lights of the great town glimmering in the distance, as she approached it toward the close of a December day. She knew that she would probably soon meet Frederick, when his manner would reveal at once whether he continued to love her or not. She had little doubt how it would be; but still there was some uncertainty, just enough to make her heart tremble, without filling it with fear.

Her cousins met her at the door, almost smothering her with kisses. One carried off her bon, another untied the strings of her hat, a third stooped to remove her overshoes, and her uncle, making his way with good-humored violence into the crowd, fairly lifted her in his arms and bore her into the drawing-room. Anne was quite overpowered by the warmth of the welcome, and came near shedding tears. Her uncle saw her emotion, however, and prevented the outburst by a humorous sally that set all laughing.

"Come now," he said, at last, "don't devour Anne, but lets devour the supper, which is smoking hot in the dining-room. Anne must be both hungry and fatigued, yet you keep her from the table, and hang upon her as if she was as strong as Sampson. Take my arm, niece, and let us see whether your cousins can make coffee as well as work crotchet."

The supper was a good old-fashioned one, the very sort of meal for a famished traveller. A smoking beefsteak at the head of the board, coffee, hot cakes, and lighter food for those who chose it. Anne did justice to the steak, as did her uncle; but her less hungry cousins contented themselves with a cold relish. Soon the merry party adjourned again to the drawing-room, where, before a roaring grate-fire, they chatted away till ten o'clock. At that hour apples and nuts were introduced, and the whole group gathered around a round table to eat them.

"I like this way of finishing a winter evening," said her uncle, "it is a good old fashion, and should be kept up. I have no faith in your

modern trifles. Who wants ice-cream on a winter night, to send one to bed shivering?"

When Anne retired, she was shown to a warm, cozy-looking room, with curtains of red French chintz, and a bright fire blazing in the grate. One of her cousins attended her, assisted her to undress, and would have remained watching her until she fell asleep, had she not peremptorily refused to tax her kindness to this extent.

"Oh! we shall have such nice times this winter," said her elder cousin to her, on the following morning. "The opera will be here, the assemblies promise to be superior, and there will be no end to private balls, and musical parties, and other amusements. You deserve a good winter, papa says, to compensate you for your long imprisonment at home. You don't know how pa praises you: he says you are a perfect angel. I was extolling 'Jane Eyre' the other day, but he interrupted me, and said you had displayed more heroism than ever Jane did——"

"You must not tell me this," said Anne, playfully putting her hand on her cousin's mouth, "for it is only your father's partiality. Pray don't—I have self-esteem enough already—more would ruin me."

Cards without number were soon left for Anne, and more invitations than she could accept. The circle in which her cousins moved was large, and what was better for the *debutante* intelligent. The city of —, populous as it is, has still some sets left where neither ignorant wealth, nor impudent fashion has sway, but where good breeding, moral worth and intellectual cultivation hold the control: and the best of these sets, was the one in which Anne now found herself. Her sweetness of disposition and her well-informed mind made her speedily a favorite. The gentlemen almost universally liked her, and some even acknowledged to a warmer sentiment. But she avoided receiving any but the most ordinary courtesies from the younger ones, and was best pleased when her uncle, or some of his friends were conversing with her in one corner. She was not ashamed to decline dancing, because she did not know the Polka; and she won the esteem of a distinguished statesman, a mild-looking, grey-haired man, but one high in the councils of his country, by frankly declaring

that she did not wish to learn this then fashionable dance.

"That is right, my dear young lady," he said. "Manners make laws, as a great philosopher has said, and woe be to our laws when our manners become Parisian. A good old country dance has a hearty merriment in it consistent with the sterling character of our excellent ancestors. A quadrille, though more quiet, is alas! more conventional also; but a quadrille we could endure. The Polka, however, is so thoroughly alien to the American character that it never can take root here, except among mere fashionables and their empty imitators. I wish some one would write the history of these foreign dances, for then, I think, they would be less popular, at least with modest females. The origin of all of them is low, and few are danced in good society at home. We old men look at these things more seriously than young people generally, for we see deeper into them. The free manners introduced by the Polka have already quite changed the sober decorum of our social life, and instead of it we now have a false glare that is perfectly detestable to one familiar with the old order of things. But I tire you. Age, Miss —, is garrulous and didactic. You would rather be in this quadrille, which they are now forming."

Anne would rather have listened to "this old man eloquent" all night; and so she said; but a gentleman came up, at this moment, to whom she had promised her hand in a dance, and she was forced to leave the great and good senator.

XIII.

ANNE had now been in town a fortnight, and yet had heard nothing of her lover. Considering the circumstances under which they had parted, she could not announce her arrival by sending him a card, but must trust to accident to make him acquainted with her presence in the city. He did not mingle much in the set in which her cousins principally moved. He was acquainted with a few families in it, and generally attended their parties, but he did not care much for society, and, therefore, made no effort to extend his acquaintances. Anne's cousins had often met him, but had never been introduced to him. And since her arrival in town he had not been seen by them anywhere.

Only her uncle and his eldest daughter were aware of Anne's former engagement. When, therefore, the conversation turned, one day, on the young physician, her cousins spoke of him with a freedom which otherwise they would have avoided.

"Don't you think him handsome, Cousin Anne?" said one. "He came from your part of the country, and you must have seen him, at

church at least, if nowhere else. Oh! I declare he looks so interesting I could almost fall in love with him."

"That would be useless now, Mary," said another sister, "for rumor says he is engaged to Miss Warren, the daughter of the celebrated physician."

"When did you hear that?"

"At Mrs. B——'s, the other night. You know he visits her, and is always at her parties, for he is a great favorite with her. Well, she told me he had quite deserted her of late; that he was now always at the Warrens; and that it would be a three-fold speculation for him to marry the daughter, because she was not only a beauty and an heiress, but would bring to her husband eventually, if a physician, all her father's practice and position."

"But are you sure there is no mistake about this?" asked the other.

"I have heard of it since, and from several sources. I saw him driving Miss Warren out in a sleigh, the other day; and they looked just like lovers, I assure you. So, Mary dear, keep a sharp look out after that heart of yours, and don't fall in love with a man who is as good as married."

Had the speakers known a title of the anguish that racked Anne's heart during this conversation, they would have ceased long before. Our heroine now understood why she had not seen Frederick. For several days uneasy misgivings as to his faithfulness to her had tormented her mind. She knew that he still kept up a correspondence with numerous acquaintances in the country, who would not have failed to mention so unexpected an event as her widowed sister's return to the homestead and her own visit to the city. Aware of these facts, would he not, if he still loved her, seek to meet her in society, even if pride forbade his calling upon her? Once in her presence, even if accidentally, he could, if he wished, learn whether he was entirely forgotten; and, finding himself still remembered, could renew his engagement without sacrifice of feeling. So had reasoned, so had hoped our heroine. But the conversation to which she had just listened, had destroyed these illusions. She saw now that Frederick had forgotten her, that another possessed his love. Oh! the agony of that moment. She thought, for a moment, that she should die. The power of breathing seemed to abandon her; the room span around; she caught at the chair to keep herself from falling. But, rallying all her strength, for sorrow had taught her great self-command, she choked down her emotions, and rising, left the room, without her cousins having observed her agitation.

Once in her chamber, however, she gave way to

a passionate burst of grief. Though she had herself dismissed Frederick, though she had told herself often that he would cease to love her, the terrible reality that this had come to pass was almost more than she could bear. Her nature, as we have said, was one to love deeply, to love but once. In the solitude and sorrow of the three past years, she had clung to the hope that she and Frederick would yet be united, that Providence would not permit her sacrifice to be in vain. But this bright dream was now dissipated.

At first she had shook under her blow. Sobs, racking her frame, followed sobs; tears rolled, in great drops, over her cheeks; ejaculations, wrung unwillingly from her, told her fierce agony. But at last nature became exhausted. She fell asleep with the tears still on her eye-lashes like a child worn down with much weeping.

When she woke, she woke refreshed. She looked out of the window. The sun was shining on the bright snow; gay equipages were dashing past; and merry sleigh-bells filled the air with jocund music. Her heart caught something of the gaiety without. Hope once more took possession of her bosom.

"I will not despair," she said. "For three years have I waited for this time, and now that it has come I give up at a mere rumor. No, I will hope on, at least until I meet Frederick, and know from his own lips, or from what I see, that he loves another."

XIV.

BY-AND-BYE there was a knock at her door. She rose and opened it, when her elder cousin entered.

"You have not forgotten the opera to-night, Anne, have you?" she said. "I have been looking for you for an hour, to ask you what you intend to wear."

Anne, much as she liked the opera, had forgotten that she was engaged to go to it that evening; but now she turned her mind to it at once. She was not of those young ladies, who, when they do not know they are to meet a certain gentleman, are careless of their dress. On the contrary she was always, not only neat, but elegant in her attire. Yet it was not from vanity that she was thus particular in her personal appearance. The sense of the beautiful, that most glorious gift of heaven to mortal man, was strong within her, and it was exquisite pleasure for her to gratify it in herself, and behold the beautiful in others.

Lovely indeed did Anne look, that evening, as she took her seat in the opera box. She wore a Marie Stuart cap of velvet, trimmed with pearls; and a sacque of black cashmere, edged with white swan's-down. Her rounded arms were bare, but

without ornaments, unless a simple black velvet ribbon clasping the wrist may be called such. The pearly clearness of her complexion was set off to the best effect by this costume, which was also particularly appropriate, as she had worn half mourning since the death of her brother-in-law.

The opera was Norma, that grandest of lyrical dramas: and the part of the priestess was played by Truffi, who seems, in her majestic beauty, as if born solely for the role. Anne was an excellent Italian scholar, and followed the story with ease. She had never heard this opera before, and from the time when the opening chorus burst upon her, to that unequalled scene, in which Norma, after betraying her lover to his enemies, relents, she listened breathlessly. But when that terrible climax was reached, and Norma, torn with agony, began the duett, "*Qual cor tradisti*," Anne was transported with enthusiasm. Her fine artistic mind realized, with the most exquisite pleasure, the skill and genius which had made the entire drama to revolve, as it were, around this one scene, making it the grand central point, as well as crisis of the play. And yet, with all this artistic gratification, there was a feeling of terrible torture. Indeed the situation of Norma and of herself was too similar not to produce emotions of pain. As she saw the agony in Norma's face, and beheld the suffering betrayed by her voice, Anne acknowledged a kindred sorrow, and mechanically repeated to herself the wild expostulation of the priestess.

Just at this instant her eyes fell upon an opposite box for the first time. Her look rested upon its occupants at first abstractedly, but gradually a familiar form there arrested her attention, and she became aware that she saw Frederick at last before her. Nor was he alone. At his side sat a beautiful girl of nineteen, far more beautiful, Anne felt, than herself; and over this fair creature Frederick was bending, apparently with the greatest interest. The lady was evidently saying something in reference to the play, and, as she spoke, she turned her face up to Frederick's with a look of unmistakeable affection. A sharp pang shot through Anne's heart, especially as one of her cousins, noticing the direction of her eyes, whispered,

"That is Miss Warren of whom we were speaking this morning. Won't they make a handsome couple?"

Anne could not answer. She needed now no confirmation of the rumor that Frederick and the heiress were engaged; for her own eyes had seen enough. Her brain grew dizzy: the stage reeled around her; dim noises were in her ears. In vain she struggled to master her emotion.

She felt herself sinking from her seat, and uselessly clutching at the air as she found herself falling, she slid from her chair to the floor. The last sound she heard was the agonizing finale of the duett, ringing in her ears like the sound of the bewailing sea.

Thus, as the tragedy on the stage reached its climax, as great a one, in real life, was passing in the dress-circle. And as the priestess sank, in death, to the boards, a fair form, apparently lifeless, was borne through the lobby.


(TO BE CONCLUDED.)

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THE SHERIFF OF OSKALOO.

BY HOWARD SEELY.

PART I.



THE Sheriff of Oskaloo was in a retrospective mood. He was seated on the front gallery of the Alameda Hotel and listlessly smoking. It was four o'clock in the afternoon, and he had been sitting there since dinner-time, his eyes straying away over the level plain to the cool shadows and green vistas that bordered the river. The opportunity to indulge in reverie was unusual with him, and he regarded

his present leisure with a certain cynical misgiving. For a month past, there had been throughout the county no disturbance that justified his professional interference; a singular amity pervaded all commercial dealing. From his contemplative post of observation, Mr. Mosely shook his head at this state of things with a grave disquietude.

"I feel," he remarked to an appreciative friend, "as if I was livin' in a powder-mill, and, if I winked more than common, somebody 'd be dead certain to fire the magazine. I wonder jest natchally what deviltry is gettin' up."

This apparent distrust of human nature, on the part of Mr. Mosely, was one which his calling perhaps justified. It was noticeable, moreover, that he had allowed no rust to accumulate on his six-shooters in the interval. How far the recent enforcement of a law that no private citizen should be permitted to carry revolvers may have contributed to the present public serenity, is debatable. Mr. Mosely, in his official capacity, wore his prominently, with the accustomed ease and familiarity of long habit. As he reclined in his chair, their long polished barrels, protruding from his leathern belt, lent his diminutive figure an air of force and power which was generally accented by a certain hard steely glitter in his clear blue eyes during moments of excitement. At

present, these eyes had in them a pensive expression to which they were not entirely strangers; and the heavy mustache, which concealed the firm mouth beneath it, swept his bronzed cheek with a caress that half softened the stern line of the jaw. It was easy to see that the natural hardihood of the man slumbered within him, and that some finer emotion had stolen upon him unchallenged.

The fact was, that, under the influence of the genial sunshine and the soft balmy air of that summer afternoon, the Sheriff's memory had gone back to an episode of his early life which he seldom permitted himself to disturb, but which he cherished with tenderest affection. He had never married; and, now that there were streaks of silver in his scanty hair, he had certain lonely moments when his thoughts recurred to a dream of his youth, that had faded almost as soon as realized. Whatever his career had been, and the exigencies of his calling had not made it a pleasant one to contemplate, he could say with truth that he had been faithful to this memory. There was one bright spot in his past, about which the holiest associations were gathered; and the name "Edith" still swept over his heart with its former thrill. He pictured to himself how different his life might have been, had a kindly fate spared to him the society of this lovely being of earlier days. He recalled her nameless graces, her charming coqueties, her sweet feminine candor and appreciative sympathy; and then he thought of other men, companions of his early manhood, whom he had seen gather about them the refining influences of home and children. As he contrasted their enviable lot with his own isolated perilous existence, he seemed the loneliest man he knew, and there stole into his eyes an unaccustomed moisture that quite subdued their professional fearlessness. With a record for courage and daring that was unimpeached, he seemed to himself, at such moments, as weak as a woman; and, as his troubled gaze rested upon the wooded heights before him, he thought

he would stroll across the intervening space and try to forget it all under the familiar shadows of the pecans.

For a person of the Sheriff's temperament, an idea of this kind was no sooner entertained than acted upon; and, a few moments later, he had penetrated the shady stillness of the grove. There was a subtle companionship in the sturdy trunks that stood about him, their lofty tops scarcely stirring in the gentle breeze. Calm, erect, and immovable, they seemed to typify, in the austerity of their repose, that very self-reliance for which the Sheriff was remarkable. The disquieted man was, in a measure, sustained by their presence. Afar in the dim wood, the faint cawing of quarrelsome ravens soothed him unconsciously. In the cool pervasive twilight about him, he was beginning to regain his customary equipoise, when the sight of an unfamiliar object recalled his former musings with a distinct emotional thrill. Lying at the foot of the tree against which he was leaning, was a woman's glove. The Sheriff stooped and picked it up. It was a slight affair of undressed kid, and there clung to it a delicate perfume that pleasantly suggested the sex of the wearer. With a half-unconscious gesture, Mosely raised it to his lips, and, as the soft trifle swept his rough cheek, his whole being was again convulsed with the anguish of a vanished memory. It was in just such a place as this that he had been wont to meet the woman he had loved. He closed his eyes dreamily, and his trembling thought went tenderly back to a little grave far away over Southern hills; and, as he mused, a wood-dove on a limb above filled the air with her mournful cooing.

It was only a fancy, to be sure; but, as the Sheriff listened, with nerves all aquiver with sad recollections, the plaintive cry seemed to him the moan of some disembodied spirit in the air about him. Perhaps the wraith of the love he had lost was that instant hovering near him in the recesses of the wood. He raised his eyes involuntarily to the blue vault, and, as he did so, a small white bird, aloft in the limitless ether, drifted on motionless pinions far above his head and dropped from sight behind the leafy veil of the trees. The Sheriff sighed. Even thus, in a breath, he thought, we are gone. With a half-caressing tenderness, he

smoothed out the crumpled glove and placed it in the breast-pocket of his ducking jacket.

He stood there some moments, lost in an abstracted reverie, until the pleasant sound of voices came to him through the wood. The Sheriff was in a mood when he shrank from scrutiny; and, without betraying his presence, his swiftly observant eyes ran hurriedly over objects about him. At some distance in front of him, he perceived the figures of a young man and woman seated at the base of a mighty boulder and engaged in conversation. The girl was talking rapidly and earnestly, with pretty feminine gestures of protest and appeal. Her companion listened in an attitude of dejection. He had cast his hat upon the ground, and his bowed head rested upon his hands. To the soothing remonstrances of the woman, he made no response; and presently the pleasant voice ceased its entreaty. There was a short interval of silence, during which Mosely, wishing to escape observation, sank down quietly at the foot of the tree. When the Sheriff looked again, the woman had bent her head upon the shoulder of her dejected companion, and was wiping the tears from her eyes with a diminutive handkerchief.

There was something in this little incident so in keeping with Mosely's own reflections, that he felt its pathos mingled with a keen curiosity. He shrewdly guessed that the young woman was the owner of the glove he had just found, and he felt a natural inclination to restore it; but it was evident the occasion was not a fitting one. Such an act on his part would be attended, under the circumstances, with an embarrassment he did not care to cause. Perhaps he would not have hesitated, in the case of strangers; but it happened that both parties were well known to him. He recognized, in the weeping girl, Miss Jessie Meredith, the daughter of a wealthy cattle-owner of Oskalo. The young fellow was Dick Heyward, for whom the Sheriff entertained a cordial regard. He had long suspected a secret attachment to exist between the couple, and now he had unwittingly stumbled upon their little romance. He would have willingly retraced his steps; but he could not do this without betraying the fact that they had been observed. So he remained seated at the foot of the tree, speculating not a little on the cause of the girl's disquietude.

"The old story," he told himself, thinking of the proverbial trials and disappointments of clandestine lovers and recalling certain tears in his own experience which he would have given worlds not to have caused. Somehow, the irony of fate seemed to him even more cruel than before; and, lost to his immediate surroundings, he became tinged with a gentle melancholy. A sudden beam of sunlight, falling through the branches overhead, recalled him to himself.

Whatever farewells were exchanged between the lovers had evidently taken place in the interval. On raising his eyes, he espied the erect figure and fluttering skirts of Miss Jessie, far across the level meadow that led to the village. The girl was walking rapidly, as if belated, and in a few moments disappeared from view behind some intervening shrubbery. Surprised at this sudden departure, Mosely turned to see if Heyward still kept his position. The young man was seated in the same despondent attitude, but apparently examining something intently. His behavior was singular. Mosely regarded him critically, and his quick ear caught the sharp familiar click of steel. He saw Heyward rise suddenly to his feet and place something to his head that glanced in the sunlight. On the instant, the Sheriff sent his voice before him through the wood, in a shrill scream of warning that woke its remotest echoes.

The man started, faced about, and a revolver fell involuntarily from his hand. With a bound, in which trained nerve and muscle seemed at once to assert their accustomed energy, the Sheriff hurried to his side.

Evidently his intrusion was as unwelcome as it was unexpected. After the first shock of surprise, Heyward had thrown himself down again disconsolately at the foot of the boulder. In this attitude, he was found by the panting Sheriff.

"What's up, Dick?" said Mosely, briskly.

For answer, the man flung a pebble at a neighboring tree and turned away with a hopeless gesture.

"You ain't reckonin' to put an end to yerself?" the Sheriff inquired, stooping and possessing himself of the relinquished pistol.

Heyward aimed a kick at a fragment of bark, but said nothing.

The Sheriff lost his temper at this obstinacy.

"Look here!" he said. "Dick Heyward, this child's-play is all nonsense! I'm a friend of yours, and I want to know what's gone with ye."

After a few moments' sullen contemplation of his boots, the dejected figure became briefly communicative.

"I lost my pile last night, at Jim Wily's."

"Buckin' agin faro?"

"No—Mexican monte."

The Sheriff whistled to himself contemptively.

"When are you goin' to give up thet business?" he said, severely. "I thought you told me you'd quit gamblin'."

"I reckoned to give it all up," the man said, sullenly, plucking at the grass about him.

"I see you did," said the other, quietly. Then, stooping down, he put one hand upon the shoulder of his companion and gazed long and critically into his eyes.

"See here, Dick: you don't want to play an old feller like me. What's up between you and Jessie?"

"Nothin'," said Heyward, doggedly.

"In course not," rejoined the Sheriff, with an incredulous sneer. "Hez the old man asked you to marry her lately?"

Heyward laughed bitterly.

"He said he'd postpone thet until he consulted with you on the subject," he replied.

Mr. Mosely shed this evident sarcasm with a shrug of his shoulders.

"You wouldn't lose nothin' by his doin' thet," he remarked, convincingly. "Come, old chap," he said, in a friendly tone, "aren't you crowdin' the mourners? I know the old man's a crank, and it's all thet young blood can do to put up with it. But you've got too good stuff in ye, to give up in this fashion. Them ez does this thing," the Sheriff remarked, gravely, rising to his feet and appealing to the surrounding trees in witness of the folly of suicide, "is nothin' short of cowards or jackasses. I've known you for the last dozen years, and yer name ain't found in either directory."

Touched by the manner of the Sheriff, Dick Heyward assumed a half-erect attitude.

"It ain't thet the old man don't like me," he said, doggedly; "but he's backin' somebody else, and I can't do nothin'. He sent me word, this afternoon, by Jessie, not to come near his ranch nor to call on his daughter."

ter. Bein' ez I'm cleaned out now, it don't make so much difference, and I reckoned the easiest way out of the hull bizness was to get out!"

Heyward stared before him in a hopeless way.

"Stuff!" said Mosely, with sudden emphasis. He drew a couple of segars from his pocket, and tossed one to his companion.

"Who does the old man favor?" he inquired, striking a match.

"Thet's what gets me!" returned Heyward, disconsolately, disdaining the proffered segar. "I never met him, and Jessie won't tell me, because she allows I'd have a row with him."

"Sensible girl," said the Sheriff, nodding through the smoke-wreaths about his head. "She don't care for him, I reckon?"

"She allows she don't," returned Heyward. "Natchally I can't say."

The Sheriff ruminated a few moments in silence. "I reckon she oughter know," he replied. He took a long pull at his segar and expelled the smoke forcibly.

"Old man," he said, slowly, glancing down affectionately at his friend, "do you remember thet little bizness you did for me once, when thet blackleg allowed to call me in with thet double-barreled shot-gun?"

Heyward looked up at him.

"You mean Johnson?"

"Yes," said the Sheriff, "I mean Johnson. Are you tryin' to tell me thet a man who kin shoot a rascal dead in his tracks ez nip and percise ez you did on thet occasion ain't built for somethin' better than to put this miserable toy shooter to his head and throw up the game, jest because the luck's agin him? Dick Heyward," he said, severely, "for a young man with points and a good girl to work for, you come the nearest to bein' a plumb idgit of anybody I've ever seen."

Dick Heyward shrugged his shoulders under this wholesale castigation.

"What's a fellow goin' to do?" he pleaded. "Run away and get married?"

"No," said Mosely, sternly; "not in no circumstances. No man is justified in takin' a young woman away from her father and mother, without they give him leave."

"What then?" asked Heyward, hopelessly.

"Look here," said Mosely, quickly: "I've been a young man myself, and I can feel for ya. I did thet very thing you speak of, and

it killed the loveliest woman thet was ever born. I've had my hard lines too, and I tell you thet there's nothin' I wouldn't do to wipe out thet one act of a rash and hot-headed boy."

Heyward had risen to his feet during this last appeal.

"I've been pretty near where you've been," continued the Sheriff, in strong emotion, turning his gaze upon his surprised companion; "and what a man wants, that day, is some friend to put an arm around him and stand by."

With a strong potential gesture, the Sheriff laid both hands upon the shoulders of his companion and looked him full in the eyes.

"Dick Heyward," he said, firmly, "tell me you'll quit gamblin', and I'll appoint you my deputy this minute."

The ruined gamester met the resolute orbs of his friend, and felt a subtle influence of power. Clear and compelling, their indomitable glance thrilled his resolves and strengthened his feeble will.

He grasped both hands of the Sheriff in his own and said:

"I've cashed my last chip, Ike; I swear it!"

"I knowed it! I knowed it!" said Mosely, fervently. With a sudden contemptuous gesture, he flung far away from him the small Derringer he had held. The flashing weapon circled through the twilight wood, and fell with a tiny splash into the neighboring river.

The Sheriff put his hand significantly to the great six-shooters that hung in his belt.

"And now," he said, "to a man's work and a man's weapons. It's in you, Dick, to behave yourself and to win this woman."

He paused, and, as if in earnest of his previous words, threw one arm affectionately about his companion.

"And through it all, old man, in luck and out of luck, yer best friend is Ike Mosely. Don't you never forgit it."

He turned, gripped the hand of his companion in his quick nervous clasp, and together they passed out of the grove.

PART II.

WITH his appointment as Deputy Sheriff, a great change came upon Heyward's life. Hitherto he had led an aimless listless existence, with little thought for the morrow or its obligations. A good-looking easy-mannered fellow, he had tried his hand at

the various means of livelihood which the frontier town afforded, and found little difficulty in satisfying the scanty needs of that primitive civilization. A dreamer of dreams and the possessor of sound health, he made no provision for the future. So, when the mechanical toil of one occupation palled upon him, he readily forsook it for another. From beginning life as an apprentice to a carpenter, he had aspired to the exciting life of a stage-driver, and, finding that too laborious, had abandoned it for the duties of postmaster and a clerkship in the village store. Wearying in turn of these, he left the town behind him, and followed for a time the wild life of the plains—learning, amid cow-camps, and sheep-ranches, the rude details of a perilous calling. But the same restless spirit which sent his comrades periodically to town invariably brought Heyward thither, to vie with them in recklessness and extravagance. Thus it was that the money earned at the risk of life and limb found, in the hands of this careless spendthrift, the inevitable goal of the gaming-table, until, as we have seen, the Sheriff discovered his improvident friend stranded and desperate.

Far different from the easy makeshifts of his former life were the demands of his new calling. Responsibility and method were to be the watchwords of his future. Appreciating that the change in his habits would be best brought about by close companionship, the practical Sheriff arranged that his deputy should reside with him. In the snug and box-like cottage which he called his own, there were none of the allurements that had formerly betrayed his protégé. The Sheriff's home was as austere as his daily existence. There was little about his lonely cabin that did not smack of the hand-to-hand fight with danger which was its owner's daily portion. But, with the ready tact and cheerful hardihood that characterized him, Mr. Mosely addressed himself to his pupil. I pass over the long homilies, the shrewd bits of advice, the daily practice in the use of fire-arms, with which the neophyte was favored. Suffice it that, with that easy adaptability which seemed his by nature, he became readily proficient; and that, when a sudden outbreak of "road-agents" in a neighboring county justified the Sheriff's former misgivings and summoned both to the scene of hostilities Dick Heyward acquitted himself with a skill

and intrepidity that justified Mr. Mosely's warmest commendation.

Six weeks of their adventurous life had thus rolled away, and there had been no allusion made by the Sheriff to the theme of which Heyward's heart was full. Beyond a vague statement on the part of his chief, that he would "use his infloesence with the old 'un," Mr. Mosely had refrained from referring to the subject. Heyward often wondered whether his friend realized that he had had no glimpse of Jessie in the interval, and that his heart ached with loneliness and foreboding. Indeed, as the days passed by, it seemed to Dick that a strange moodiness and abstraction possessed his companion. After a few shrewd inquiries as to the temperament and character of the man he was to approach, the latter abandoned himself to long silences, wrapped in clouds of tobacco-smoke, or given over to diligent and profitless whitting upon the door-stone. It was a phase of the Sheriff's character which had not hitherto presented itself to Heyward, and it troubled him, as the strange and unaccountable always do. But, when he drew the attention of certain fellow-townsmen to the matter, their comments were reassuring and characteristic.

"Figurin' on his chances of re-election," said these philosophers. "Ike's took that way occasional, and ye know he allowed to run agin, next fall. Prob'ly reckons he's bit off more'n he kin chew."

Somehow this explanation did not satisfy Heyward.

It was a pleasant afternoon, some days after this, when Sheriff Mosely left his lonely cottage, wrapped apparently in the same gloomy reverie that had lately oppressed him. To the observant spectator, there was something in his appearance that suggested business of a novel and peculiar nature. The well-worn suit of brown ducking, that usually clothed his nervous figure as if a part of the actual man, had been discarded for newer garments of conventional pattern, known on the frontier as "store-clothes." In them, the worthy officer betrayed an uncomfortable sense of being "dressed up," that was accented by the "boiled shirt" and standing collar which oppressed his sinewy neck. Nor did he regard with complacency the "fine boots" which gave his trousers a painful appearance of being too short for their wearer.

He stooped beside a small spring that bubbled along the road he was pursuing, and drew a pocket-flask from his hip with a preoccupied air.

"I reckon the old feller don't irrigate," he said to himself, solemnly. "All the more reason why I should get myself in fix to wrestle with him."

He raised the flask to his lips and partook freely of its contents. Evidently the stimulant did not possess its customary virtues.

"Somehow ye don't seem to reconcile me none to the situation," he soliloquized, addressing the flask. "I hed ruther conduct a dozen 'neck-tie matinees' than approach a parent on the subject of his darter."

At this moment, the footfall of a horse struck the Sheriff's alert ear, and a young woman rode suddenly up to the side of the spring. Mr. Mosely restored the flask to his hip with an abashed expression. It needed but a glance to discover that the fair equestrienne was none other than Miss Jessie Meredith, and attired in a fashion to provoke the admiration of mankind. As the Sheriff noted the brown eyes, fresh complexion, and bewildering dimples that had proved so disquieting to his friend's peace of mind, he was fain to confess the excellence of his taste on purely æsthetic grounds. Apparently the first impulse of the gray-haired man was to pay tribute to this vision of beauty, for his hand sought the pocket of his coat containing the missing glove he had picked up in the wood.

"I happen to have a little favor of yours I've been wanting to restore to you, miss," he said, abruptly; then, becoming aware of the change in his attire, and that he had forgotten to transfer it, he stopped in confusion.

"My glove, I presume," the fair apparition returned, smiling down at him from the saddle, as her mustang pony plunged his nostrils in the cool spring after his recent canter. "I remember I lost it over on the river, weeks ago; but it's a matter of no consequence."

She raised her frank brown eyes to the Sheriff's keen scrutiny, and a sudden blush mantled her cheek.

"How is Mr. Heyward?" she inquired. "I understand he has made his home with you lately."

"He's up to the shanty—where I reckon I left your glove," the Sheriff rejoined,

quietly, but secretly beside himself with admiration at the courage which thus demanded her lover's welfare. He paused a moment, as if to collect himself, and then adopted an equally fearless policy.

"I hope you'll excuse me, Miss Meredith," he said, "but Dick has given me the bed-rock in this little matter, and I want to say that my sympathies are with you and him from way back. I was jest now on my way to have a little tangle with your old gentleman, to see what I could do to put things in good fix. I reckon I'm competent so far as Dick is concerned, for I love the boy, and he hain't no points thet I don't understand. But, you see, in regard to your governor, I'm somehow off the trail. Ef the old man hez got any crankiness or other foolishness it'd be wise for me to steer clear of, bein' ez your heart's in this bizness, I'd be obliged for any light you'd throw on the subject afore I wade in."

Having concluded this remarkable appeal, which was delivered in a confidential undertone, the Sheriff doffed his broad sombrero and patiently waited the lady's reply.

Miss Meredith, thus abruptly confronted with the Sheriff's purpose, was quite overcome with embarrassment. She blushed like a peony, under the searching glance of the man before her, and seemed at first uncertain what to say or do. In her agitation, she dropped her riding-whip. Her eyes, which had hitherto dwelt calmly upon Mr. Mosely, wandered up and down the trail-road restlessly.

"I'm sure—it's very kind of you—Mr. Mosely—to take this interest," she began, hesitatingly; "but I'm afraid papa wouldn't like to have you speak to him about it."

"That's jest it!" returned Mosely, "and I reckon it's mighty lucky I run across you this very afternoon. I've been figgerin' on the matter until I've pretty near lost my grip; and now, miss, I'm goin' to ask you to turn back, and we'll try and corral the old man in partnership. I'll put it to him fair and square; and, if he rares or shows any signs of kickin' in the traces, you kin stand by and kinder put the curb on him. I reckon you look as if you might be able to do it, and, when strangers prove anyway excitin', there's nothin' like the presence of a man's own flesh and blood to prevent his raisin' the roof."

He bestowed an appreciative glance on Miss Meredith, as he gallantly restored the riding-whip. The young lady was still embarrassed.

"But, you see, I had something else I wanted to do, this afternoon—another engagement."

The Sheriff gave a shrewd glance in the direction of his distant cottage.

"I know it," he said, quickly: "but Dick is very busy to-day. I left him cleanin' up my Winchesters and six-shooters; and besides, you and I don't want to ring anything in on the governor that isn't straight and above-board. He's seen fit to quarantine Dick from your society; and, unless he gives the word, we don't want to start in anything onderhanded. Come, miss—you go back with me, and we'll have a reg'lar tow-row with the old gentleman over the situation."

He slipped her horse's bridle over his arm as he spoke, and took a step or two, as if to compel her compliance.

"In all affairs of this kind," he said, reassuringly, glancing back at her, "someone has got to break the ice and start the mill, or we don't get nowhar. I reckon, in the present case, we've got a big contract; but, whatever the old man proposes, at least we'll meet him in the open." And, by sheer force of will, he led the unwilling maiden off captive.

Meanwhile, left to himself in the cottage, Dick Heyward, pursuing his task of cleaning the Sheriff's fire-arms, was speculating sadly over his unfortunate love-affair and the Sheriff's singular change of manner. Engrossed in his work, there suddenly seemed to come to him, on the breeze that was borne up the valley, the sound of a well-remembered voice. He raised his head and listened. It must have been a fancy; and yet, half wonderingly, he stepped to the door and cast a longing glance down the dim trail-road. He beheld the Sheriff in conversation with a lady on horseback, and the flash of a familiar gray dress through the trees at once disclosed her identity. His nervous hand closed tight upon the revolver he was cleaning, in the suddenness of his surprise. Why was it? He was not jealous of the gray-haired man who had so recently left him? He dared not trust himself to say; and, after a few moments'

reverie, he left the door with an impatient gesture. The incident disquieted him; and, when an hour later he went to the closet to procure some implement, he was flushed and irritated, and a nervous light shone in his eyes. The tool he wanted did not readily present itself, and half unconsciously he made a rapid examination of the pockets of an old coat in the closet, in his efforts to find it. Some formless object was hidden in the breast of the garment. He drew it quickly forth. Crushed, crumpled, but still redolent of odor, he spread it out, and discovered a woman's soiled glove. Dick Heyward smiled grimly to himself. Had the Sheriff, too, his own romance? The next moment, he dashed the glove upon the floor and spurned it beneath his heel in a sudden frenzy. It was Jessie's! He knew it by the peculiar brown stitching he had often examined, and the perfume so strangely familiar. In the first tumult of his jealous agony, he put both hands to his eyes, as if to blot out the sight of the hateful object. A shudder shook him, and he groaned aloud. Then he ran to the door and cast a quick searching glance down the narrow valley. There was no one in sight. Down by the spring, where he had formerly seen the couple in conversation, the shrill scream of a soaring hawk came distinctly to him, as he wheeled aloft in the still breezy afternoon. To the man's startled nerves, it seemed like the mocking cry of some demon who was cognizant of the agony within him.

It was all clear now; and Heyward reeled against the wall, as he comprehended the significance of the weeks that had gone over his head, while his rival had improved the opportunity of his absence. It had all been a plot, devised by the Sheriff and Jessie's father, to cheat him of the love he coveted. He understood now the former's reticence and singular apathy. The man so vaguely understood by him to be a disputant for his sweetheart's affections was the Sheriff—Mosely himself! In his rage and mortification, the indignant deputy caught up a pair of six-shooters and began to load them rapidly, the steel cylinders clicking ominously, as if in remonstrance, under his eager fingers.

There was but one way now, and his mind was made up to it. He would seek out the man who had thus betrayed him, upbraid him

with his perfidy, press his six-shooters upon him, and force him to defend at the revolver's muzzle the flagrancy of his conduct. His brain was on fire with his wrongs, and his hands shook as he caught up his hat from the table and buttoned his pistol-belt about him. He cast one hurried glance around at the dwelling which had grown to be a home to him in the days now past. How quiet and still it looked! how utterly out of sympathy with the mad emotions which thrilled him! His eyes fell upon the glove lying upon the floor—a mute witness to the treachery of its owner—and, with a muttered imprecation, he caught it up and strode away, slamming the door behind him with a violence that shook the rafters.

As his swift footsteps took him rapidly from the little cottage, the wrath that was in him surged in his brain and spoke in his heart. Where could he find a parallel for the treachery of this man he had called his friend? What cause, pray, had he to attempt to settle his quarrel in the interest of right and justice? Had not the culprit placed himself, by his act, beyond the pale of mercy? Was he justified in giving so double-dyed a villain a single chance for his miserable existence? Ought he not rather to rush upon him, and, with a single imprecation at his baseness, shoot him down as ruthlessly as he might some desperate assassin?

And, as he thought, he heard a quick step along the road ahead of him, and a familiar voice apparently in exultant conversation. With his fell purpose still mastering him and his hand clutching a revolver, he sprang quickly aside and dashed into the thicket.

The voices quickly drew near. They were those of a man and woman. Apparently they were discussing something of a jocular nature, for occasional peals of laughter smote the ears of the listener. Straining his ears, he with difficulty made out the following:

"I reckoned I was plumb done for when I first opened up the subjeck to the old gentleman," said the voice of Mosely. "Lord! when he first brought them gray optics o' his'n to bear on me, I felt like throwin' up my hands. But I sez to myself: 'Ike, yer in fur it,' and I jest waded in. And, when I got my blood up in the heat and thick o' the argyment, I didn't mind. I sorter let go my hopples and went in foot-loose. Did you

hear him when he aired them views o' his'n on what a husband should be? Geewittaker! I never reckoned that was only a game of bluff. I sez to myself: 'Mosely, he's got the drop on ye now; ye needn't say nothin',' until I riz right up and summed up the case in a few words. I said my say, and then I axed him plump and squar; and dern my skin ef he didn't weaken! He weakened and give his consent ez gentle ez a lamb."

"And I am so happy," said a soft voice which thrilled the listener through every fibre.

"Natchally," returned Mosely, fervently, "jest natchally; but no more than I, sis. Why, I'm a tenderfoot ef this ain't one of the happiest days— Hello! what's that?"

A stone, dislodged from a neighboring embankment, came hurtling down into the road. The next moment, a frenzied figure, torn with the thicket and brandishing a coeked revolver, burst from the roadside and confronted the Sheriff upon the open plain.

"In God's name, Dick, what's gone with you?" exclaimed the startled man, recoiling before the threatening attitude of his friend.

Dick Heyward, panting with suppressed passion, his muscles twitching with excitement, his face drawn and blanched, at first could not reply. He paid no heed to the frightened girlish figure by the Sheriff's side. His eyes, wild with an intense fury, seemed to dilate and comprehend the Sheriff only.

"You ask me that?" at last he burst forth. "I should think you'd ask me that! Here—take this six-shooter! step off ten paces, and, if you're a man, Ike Mosely, and not a black-guard—"

"Easy, now! easy, Dick, over the rough places!" returned the imperturbable Sheriff, but grasping in his steady hand the pistol which the trembling fingers of the other forced upon him. He eyed his furious friend calmly, and his clear cold blue eye shone like a diamond.

"You know me, pard; my record's a clear one. I don't do nothin' I ain't willin' to back, and, ef I've wronged you in any way, I'll meet you sartin. But speak out, boy! Are you crazy, Dick? What hev you got agin me?"

With a quick movement, Heyward tore the tell-tale glove from his breast and cast it upon the ground between them.

"How came you by that?" he asked, sternly.

The eyes of Mosely dwelt upon the missing gauntlet an instant, and then lighted up with a humorous gleam. He stooped, and, with a quick gesture, restored it to his companion.

"There's thet unfortunet glove I told you I found in the grove over a month since," he said, carelessly. Then he took the hand of the embarrassed girl, and, with a strong compelling gesture, placed it in the grasp of his astounded deputy.

"Old man," he said, "ef I hadn't been in love myself, and didn't know what an idgit it makes of the best men, I'd be tempted to step out here and exchange shots with you, jest to teach you a moral lesson. Here for the last six weeks I've hed this

subjeck on my mind to an extent that it's broke my sleep and interfered with my appetite. It's done more to put gray in my hair than anything I ever attempted, and, when at last I got my spunk up and interviewed the old man fur ye—told him how changed ye were, and sorter contemplated ye ez I might a brand-new statue I'd been makin'—set things in a proper light, and got his consent to the match, you turns upon me and reckons to scalp me like a wild Injun. It's enough," said the Sheriff, solemnly, baring his head and glancing upward reverentially, "the foolishness thet the course of true love will ring in on a rational creetur is almost enough to shake one's faith in Providence."

THE SPANISH BRIDE.

BY MRS. JANE G. AUSTIN.

A FIERCE storm had been driving down the Pyrenees, all day long, lashing the chestnut and ilex branches against each other like whips, scooping a new channel for the headlong mountain torrent, that watered the valley of Praya del Norte, and beating against the gray old walls of the monastery.

The monks had just finished Vespers, and Father Peter, the porter, went, according to custom, to lock the convent gate for the night.

"Holy Mother," he cried, suddenly, "what is this?"

A closely covered carriage, drawn by four mules, dashed down the narrow road, and stopped in front of the gate, and a voice called from the rumble, in the rear.

"How far to the next town, father?"

"Three leagues to Villanova, my son. And be very careful at the ford, for the river is swollen already, and by morning may not be passed."

"Milé diabolos! Pardon, father. But we shall never reach Villanova, I fear. Might we stay here?"

"Who asks for hospitality?" enquired the monk, cautiously.

"My master, Señor Don Alphonso de Guzman; his son, Don Ignacio; and his daughter, Doña Carmita, with Bettina, her nurse."

"Your master and the mules, the postillions and yourself, are welcome. The women cannot be received."

"Caramba! You would leave a delicate lady, and an old woman, exposed to this tempest, all night?"

"I did not compose the rules of this house, my son, nor can I alter them," replied the monk.

"Thunder and lightning! I will call my master," interrupted the servant, angrily.

"Do so, my son, and I, meantime, will go and bring the prior."

When the servant-man presently returned, conducting a tall and stately cavalier, whose black brows and quivering moustache suited well the angry light of his eyes, they were met by the porter; and led into a little lodge beside the gate, where stood Father Baptisto, the prior.

He received his guest courteously, expressed regret that he should have been annoyed in any manner, but repeated, in smoother phrases, what Peter had already told.

"But," continued the prior, "the house of Miguel Lopez, one of our tenants, is but a-quarter of a league, or less, from our gates, and with a message from me, he will gladly offer the señorita the best he has."

"Bueno! That will do, admirably, reverend father, and we will find our way thither, at once, leave the señorita and her nurse, and return here before the hour is out. Lead on, Cherubino."

The noble, bowing haughtily, strode out of the room, followed by his valet. The prior looked after them, a slight flush staining his dark cheek, at the half-concealed insolence of the man: then he quietly said to the porter:

"Ring the bell for compline, my son, and if our guests return before the office is ended, show them to the guest chambers. Also warn brother Tomaco to prepare something more for supper. Happily it is not a fast day."

"It would do that gay serving-man no harm to fast, if it were," muttered Peter, turning away.

But before either he or the prior had traversed the long passage, leading from the lodge to the house, a strong, sudden peal at the bell startled both, and the porter, turning back, exclaimed:

"What, are they here already!"

But as he unlocked and threw wide the gate, a solitary figure appeared upon the threshold. It was that of a young man, holding a horse by the bridle. Both horse and man were streaming with rain, and worn by storm and travel.

"Good-even, father. Can you give a benighted traveler a night's lodging, for the love of God?" demanded the stranger, courteously, and the monk, opening the gate, the stranger led his horse into the court-yard, and tying him to a ring, in the most sheltered nook, stepped inside the lodge door, displaying to the prior, the tall, finely-made form, and proudly handsome features of a cavalier, not quite thirty years old, richly dressed.

"You shall have what we can offer, my son," said the monk; "but our two principal guest-rooms are already taken up, and a bare cell is all that is left."

"A soldier cares almost as little for luxuries as a monk, good father," replied the cavalier.

"But may I inquire who are your guests? I might find some friends."

Careless as the tone he assumed, there was a

ring of anxiety about it, which the monk was not slow to perceive.

"You will meet them in the refectory, presently, my son, and learn their names from themselves. What shall I call you?" he said.

"Don Carlos, if it please you, father."

"Well, then, we will meet at supper, unless you prefer coming with us to chapel, while we say compline."

"Thanks, father, I will go to chapel," replied Don Carlos, after a moment's hesitation; and, well pleased, the prior led the way through a long passage, and a winding cloister, to the half-lighted church, where the monks, already assembled in the choir, awaited their superior.

Don Carlos followed his guide, about half-way up the church, when, turning a little aside, he knelt in the deep shadow of a pillar, and drew his cloak around the lower part of his face, bowing his head as if in deep abstraction. At the same moment, the Señors de Guzman, escorted by a lay brother, entered the church by another door, and went forward to a row of chairs, directly in front of the altar. When they had fairly passed, Don Carlos cautiously raised his head, and still muffling the lower part of his face with his cloak, watched, until father and son, lifting their faces toward the lighted altar, revealed the high and haughty features of the de Guzman race. Once having fairly seen them, Don Carlos looked no more, but withdrawing a little deeper into the shadow, remained devoutly kneeling, until the office was ended, when he as quietly withdrew.

The other guests were shown at once to the refectory, and the prior was about to follow them, when, at a dark corner of the passage, he encountered Don Carlos, who said, meekly:

"Sir prior, a word with you, if you will."

"Before supper, my son?"

"Yes, father, now."

"Come in here, then." And the prior pushed open the door of a bare cell, close to the refectory, and stepped in.

"I ought to tell you," said Don Carlos, "before I ent, that I am Don Carlos d'Acunha of Cordova, and that my family, and that of de Guzman, have been for the last fifty years, at deadly feud. Now, I am only desirous to peaceably pursue my journey, but Ignácio de Guzman is of so quarrelsome a nature, that, if he should set eyes upon me, there would be daggers drawn, and blood shed, to the scandal of this holy house, and abuse of your hospitality. For this reason, father, I pray you to allow me to remain out of sight of my enemies, and not to mention my neighborhood to them. Should they speak of

another guest in the house, you might say that he gave his name as Carlos Avilla, which is indeed one of the names I have a right to bear. Will you keep my secret, father, and suffer me to sup in my own room?"

"You do well, my son," replied the prior, "to avoid needless strife. I will keep your secret, and you shall be served with food and wine in your own cell." With these words they parted.

The storm, meantime, continued so violent, that Don Guzman, before retiring, remarked, that, with the prior's permission, he would remain for another day. No preparations, in consequence, were ordered for departure. It was, therefore, with something of a start, that father Peter, as he sleepily and yawningly undid the wicket of the outer gate, after ringing the great bell to wake up the brothers, found his nose almost in contact with the top of a woman's head, upon the other side of the wicket.

"Why, father," cried a girl's voice, "surely you must know me, Dolores Lopez. I have come to speak to the reverend prior, about some eggs and chickens he sent for last night; and I come early, to get a word with him, before he goes into church for prime."

"And why did not your father come, or, at least, your mother?" demanded the monk, severely. "You know, very well, that the reverend father never wishes girls, like you, to come to the convent, except for confession. Who is there beyond you? Isabella? The prior is angry enough with her, I can tell you, after her going to the fair at Villanova, with Roberto Lopez. She'd better not come near him, very soon, unless she wants a severe penance."

"Listen, father," replied Dolores, in a low voice, and coming close to the wicket. "But first be gracious, and take this honey-comb from me. It is not against rules to eat a little honey, on a feast day, and this is Saint Agatha's, you know. It came from your hive."

"Ah, ah! you wish to coax us, little wretch," laughed the porter, who had known this daughter of the convent's farm, since she was a baby brought thither for baptism. "You know, well enough, that I shall break no rules for you, or go one step out of my duty; but inside that limit, I like to please you; you are a good girl; and as for the honey-comb, I do not say but it is a toothsome morsel on a feast day, and I thank you. Well?"

"Well, then, father, poor Isabella is so sorry for her fault, oh, you can't think how sorry, and she does so want to get her reverend godfather's pardon. Here she is, so sick and tired with crying and penitence, that she could hardly come up the hill, and if my mother knew it, she would

half kill her for leaving the house, for she has been made a real prisoner since the fair; and now, dear, good, father Peter, do just let us into the locutory, and ask the father to come and speak with us, before prime, so that Isabella may get home, and be safe in our bedroom, when my mother rises. Do now, dear father?"

"Well, well, wait till I see," and father Peter hurried away to the prior's cell.

"Courage, señorita," murmured Dolores, turning from the gate, and addressing the tall, slight, girl-figure, standing so close against the wall, as not easily to be reconnoitred from the wicket.

"The prior will be sure to come. He can't miss the chance of scolding my sister, Isabella: she is his god-child, and has been very naughty."

"What has she done, Dolores?" asked a sweet, but rather tremulous voice.

"Why, they want her to marry old Gaspardo Deluzo, a rich corn-merchant of Villanova, and the padre told her she must, and she consented; but then came our handsome cousin, Roberto; and, well, I helped her; and Isabella got out of the window, and ran away with him to the great fair at Villanova, and was there all day. Gaspardo saw her, and came raving to my father; and they went and brought her home; and my father gave her a great beating, with the donkey-stick; and Gaspardo said he wouldn't marry her now: and it is all dreadful. I suppose they will make it up, and marry her to him, finally; but she says she had rather die."

"And so would I," fervently murmured the señorita, as she followed her companion, through the little door of the convent-wall, into a small, bare room, with a grated window. Through this grating, alone, might the pernicious influence of woman penetrate into the Benedictine convent; and this room, devoted to conversational purposes, was called the locutory.

Hardly had the two girls entered, and closed the door, when the prior appeared at the opposite side of the grating, and with a hastily murmured blessing, demanded:

"Isabella, is it true that you have come to make your submission, and ask my intercession with your parents?"

"It is not Isabella, reverend father," replied a sweet voice, as the mantilla fell down upon the shoulders of the graceful figure, and displayed a face of such astonishing beauty, that, after one glance, the monk dropped his eyes, yet found them again ensnared by the little, tapering, jewelled fingers, that were nervously clasped upon the window-ledge.

"Do not be angry, father, at the deception," pursued the stranger, hurriedly. "It seemed

the only way to get speech of you, secretly and instantly; and I am in such sore distress. And do not blame Dolores, father—"

"Who are you, my daughter, and what is your need?" interposed the prior.

"I am Carmita de Guzman, father, whom you sent, last night, to the house of your farmer, Lopez," replied the young lady, with more self-possession than she had yet shown. "And this good girl, who was deputed to wait upon me, finding me in great grief and terror, spoke to me of your wisdom and kindness, and advised my coming in this manner to speak with you."

"Tell us your need, daughter, and if you can speak more freely alone with me, Dolores may wait outside."

As soon as Dolores had left, the other fell upon her knees, and sobbed out:

"Oh, father, they will marry me, to-morrow, to a bad, horrible, old man; a man I loathe and hate; and who will make me bad, too."

"Who is it?" interrupted the monk. "Who marries you to this man?"

"My father and brother. He is very rich; and my father is troubled about money; and Don Federico will give up an estate, my father and he are at law about; and he will pay my brother's debts; and dower my younger sister."

"Good things for your family, my daughter, if you will help to obtain them."

"Yes, but at what price, father? Body and soul, this world and heaven, all happiness here and hereafter."

"There is something behind all this, my child. Do you love somebody else?"

A faint color flushed into Carmita's pallid cheeks, but she answered promptly, and bravely:

"Yes, my father, I love, and have promised to marry, one who is good, brave, handsome and noble, the absolute contrast to Don Federico de Castolobranco."

"And what is the name of him you love; and what is the objection of your family?"

"He is named Rafaelo de Orvieto y Diaz; and his family and mine have been at feud, for a century or more," replied the girl, sadly.

"Besides, he is not rich, as my father counts riches, although rich enough to satisfy me."

The monk visibly started, and asked, suddenly:

"Does he come from Cordova?"

"No, father, from the neighborhood of Granada."

"How does he look?"

"He is quite tall, with a powerful figure. His eyes are hazel, and very piercing and commanding. His hair is dark, and close cut; and he wears a sweeping moustachio. He has a very pleasant

smile, although his face, in repose, is a little too haughty. Have you seen him, father?"

"Has he other names than those you mention?"

"Yes, father, he has a right to bear his mother's name of d'Acunha; and I think he is called Diego, and Carlos, besides Rafaelo. One has so many names, when one is of a good house, and of pious parents."

"Yes," replied the prior, dryly. "Well, my daughter, I can give you no better counsel than to go home, and quietly submit yourself to your father, to whom you owe duty and obedience. God promises reward to those who honor their parents—"

"Thanks, father," interrupted Carmita, rising hastily from her knees, and drawing the mantilla about her head. "The homily is admirable, but I have heard it so many times, in my life, already, that I need not detain you to deliver it again. As a last favor, I will beg you to say a requiem mass, on the morning after we resume our journey, for the souls of Federigo de Castello Branco, murdered on his wedding night; and Carmita, the wretched bride, who murdered him, and who, in justice to her, was driven to the deed, by the tyranny of her family, and the cold indifference of the priest to whom she came for aid."

She was gone, with the last word, and as the bell tolled its call to prime, the monk turned and went thoughtfully to chapel, his downcast face and frowning brows speaking deep perplexity.

The office ended, the prior took his way down the guest's corridor, and knocking slightly upon one of the last doors, was bidden to enter. The stalwart young knight was just finishing his toilet, and looking handsomer than ever.

"Good-morrow, father," he said, blithely, turning to welcome the monk. "Have I your blessing and good wishes?"

"Neither, until I know if you deserve them," replied the prior, severely. "Why did you deceive me, last night, with a false name?"

"Oh, the de Guzman's have found me out, have they?" retorted the young man, loosening his rapier in its sheath. "Very well, if Ignácio is ready, so am I. There are reasons why I had rather not have shed de Guzman blood, but if so it must be, Rafaelo de Orvieto y Diaz will not be the first man of his house to turn his back on a de Guzman."

"You shrink from shedding their blood, but you are following like a sleuth-hound upon their trail. Is it in hopes of spoiling the honor, that is worth more than life, to such as you and them?"

The prior spoke with cold severity, and fixed his eyes, keenly, on the young man.

Rafaelo glanced up, in some astonishment: then crossing his arms, and confronting the monk, he said, as coldly:

"Speak out, reverend father, if you have anything to say. I am a good son of Mother Church, and gladly pay all deference and duty to her priests; but I am not a child, to be chidden, and not make reply. What do you wish of me, beyond an apology hereby tendered, for using some reserve, last night, in giving but one of my baptismal names? I assumed the title of my mother's family, rather than my father's. It was a precaution, which, considering I was housed with two men, sworn to have my blood at the first opportunity, seems to me not ill-advised."

"You might have really trusted me, as well as pretended to do so," replied father Juan, more mildly. "And the reason I sought you now," he added, "was to ask if you are disposed to trust me, altogether. I should be glad to hear, from your own lips, if you choose to give it, the true story of your attachment to the señorita, Doña Carmita de Guzman, and to learn what is your object, in following her and her family."

"One question, on my part, father," replied the young man, after a moment of hesitation. "Do you approach me, as envoy of the Señora de Guzman?"

"No, my son, I do not. I have no reason to suppose that they know of your presence here."

"You have not? Then it must be Carmita herself? Have you seen her? Is she here?"

"Surely not, señor. You should know that no woman, of whatever degree, penetrates farther than the locutory of a Benedictine monastery. Come, my son, confide in me, without more questioning, and I will promise you, if not help, at least utter secrecy as to your communication."

Thus urged, and glad, after all, as most lovers are, to confide in a sympathetic ear, Don Rafaelo proceeded, very honestly, to tell how he had first seen Carmita, at a school festival, in the convent where his sister was educated; and how they had danced and talked together, for a long evening, before discovering that they were hereditary foes; and how, having discovered it, they agreed that the feud should end before reaching them; and how Carlotta, his sister, who had never spoken to the de Guzman, was through love of him, brought over to be their friend, and Carmita's confidante; and how, for the year after the school feast, they had corresponded, and by Carlotta's help continued to meet on sundry occasions, until finally they had pledged their troth to each other.

"Holy Mother!" interrupted the prior, at this point. "How little originality the father of

mischievous displays, in conducting these follies; the story of Isabella, the farmer's daughter at our gate, Roberto, her cousin, Dolores, the go-between sister, and Gaspardo, the old, hated bridegroom, would do admirably for the history you are telling me, señor, if we but change the names to Doña Carmita, Señor Rafaelo Carlos, Doña Carlotta, and Señor Don Federigo de Castellobranco."

"You have his name, and I have not told it!" exclaimed Don Rafaelo, more struck with this fact than with the prior's moralizing. "You must have seen Carmita!"

"Go on, my son," replied the prior. "What are you going to do now?"

"Castellobranco, with his castles, and land, and thousands of doubloons in ready gold, has bought Carmita of her proud and poor family, and they are taking her to Villanova, where he has agreed to meet them, and they will be married there, within twenty-four hours of leaving this house, if nobody prevents," replied the lover. "God help us!"

"Profane not God's name, my son. But why do such wealthy grantees choose this poor, little nook of Spain, for their marriage festivities?"

"Because they could not venture to sacrifice Carmita, in presence of her hosts of relatives and friends, at home. She declared, to her father's face, that, if they took her into church, to marry Castellobranco, she would refuse him, before the altar, and call upon priest and people to defend her. At any rate, it would have been a scandal, and the de Guzmans dared not risk it. They knew Carmita, and her proud courage, too well."

"She has a temper," murmured the prior, recalling the young lady's parting address.

But the lover did not listen.

"Castellobranco has estates here in the north," he continued, "and it was arranged that he should come to one of them; make preparations to receive his bride and her family; and then meet them, and have the wedding at Villanova, in some little church, where the priest is simply devoted to the family of Castellobranco. Once married, the poor girl is in his hands."

"Or he is hers," muttered the prior, with a shrug. But aloud he said, "well, and you?" He glanced, significantly, as he spoke, at Don Rafaelo's stalwart form, daring front, and the well-worn handle of the rapier at his side.

"I!" repeated the young man, answering the glance, with a proud and confident smile. "I have come hither to win my bride; peaceably if I may; if not, then after the fashion of the men of Benjamin, when they needed wives and were refused. My confessor told me that story, and

though he advised it not, I guessed that he would not be too much scandalized, if I followed the example."

"But you are alone, and they are three."

"I have a servant, in the neighborhood, a stout fellow, who will dispose of that wretched Cherubino, and the muleteers, should they dare show fight; and I would not have the old man touched, if I had an army at my back; but as for Ignácio, I owe him a lesson. I will not kill him, however, lest Carmita desert me for a convent."

"Does she speak of offering herself to God?" asked the monk, in a tone of relief. "That would indeed free her from the marriage she dreads, and at the same time insure her own everlasting happiness."

"I am not so sure of that, father; for she only wishes to become the bride of heaven, if she cannot be mine."

The prior, for reply, turned towards the door, and said:

"The bell is ringing for mass; come, if you will, and be present; afterward, I will send you some breakfast. Then I will see you again, and give you such advice as I can, after thinking the matter over. Promise that you will do nothing, see nobody, nor leave the convent, until I have spoken with you again."

"I promise, father," said Don Rafaelo, after a moment's hesitation. "Will the de Guzmans be at the mass?"

"Surely. The father made his shrift, last night, and will receive the sacrament," replied the prior, gravely.

"I do not mind his presence, for he does not know me by sight," explained Rafaelo. "But Ignácio and I have met, two or three times, and I must keep out of his way."

"Her father does not know you, by sight?"

"No, father; he has never seen me, at all," replied the cavalier, carelessly, as he followed the prior out of the cell.

Breakfast over, Don Alphonso, after looking at the leaden sky and pouring rain, for some moments, announced his intention of remaining all day at the convent, and also of visiting his daughter, if the prior would send a guide to show him the way to the farm-house. The prior graciously assented, and including Don Ignácio in his address, remarked:

"I might go, myself, to the farm-house, for there is a matter weighing somewhat upon my mind, with regard to my god-daughter and penitent, Carmita, there."

"Carmita!" echoed father and son, in surprise.

"Yes, the daughter of Miguel Lopez, our

farmer. Ah, yes, the Señorita de Guzman is called Carmita also, I believe?"

"Yes, father," replied the nobles, rather haughtily.

"My god-daughter is more commonly called Isabella," said the prior, serenely. "But Carmita is not an uncommon name with us Andalusians, you know. But this child—I will ask your opinion, señors, for it is after all a matter more of the world than of the cloister, and I was at my wit's end to know what I should advise and enforce. Let us sit down, and I will tell you the story, and listen to your opinion."

Nothing loth, for the day threatened to be a long and tedious one, and books were not the resource then that they are now, nor the de Guzmans a scholarly race, father and son seated themselves and listened, while the prior, with all the eloquence of which he was master, set forth the youth, grace, and beauty of his god-daughter, Isabella Carmita, and the fervent passion that had grown up between herself and her cousin, Roberto, whom the good prior also painted, in most glowing colors, as a paragon of a brave, industrious, manly young fellow, his only demerit being his poverty.

"Sangre de Dios!" here interposed the father, his grim face relaxing in a humorous smile. "With two such paragons at hand, reverend prior, what doubt can there be that they should be married forthwith, and the world enriched by a race of Phenixes?"

"And as for poverty, we can easily get this Roberto service with the Marquis of Castellobranco, whom we are going to visit," suggested Ignácio.

"The trouble is here," replied the prior, shaking his head. "The girl's family have arranged a marriage for her, with a rich old fellow of Villanova; he is a widower, with children older than poor Isabella; he is ugly, sick, cross, and wicked to a degree; he will make the poor child's life a misery to her, and either kill her outright with cruelty, jealousy, and heart-sickness, or turn her out one of those artful, intriguing women, of whom the world is full. Shall I give up my god-child to such a fate as that, señor? You, who have a daughter, can answer me."

The cavaliers looked at each other, and then keenly into the face of prior John, who met their eyes with serene unconsciousness. The elder de Guzman was the first to speak.

"Since you ask my counsel, father, I must say, that, in my opinion, family discipline should be upheld. No doubt your farmer has good reason for wishing to marry his daughter to the elder suitor—"

"Oh, his reasons are the worst part of the whole affair," interrupted the prior, indignantly. "He actually is selling his own child, body and soul, for money. Old Deluzo is rich, and he will build a mill here, upon the river, and make it over to Lopez, with money to carry it on for a year. It is a regular bargain, as if it was a heifer that they bought and sold, and not a human soul, a soul for which Christ died, and of whose fate He will demand account at the last day."

De Guzman turned pale, and thoughtfully turned the ring upon his finger. Ignácio hastily spoke:

"Why don't you stop this bargaining then, father? The man is your tenant; tell him he shall not have his mill; or build one yourself and lease it to him. The wishes of these peasants are of no account; and it is, of course, fitter to marry the girl to the young man, if no weighty interests intervene. The daughter of a noble house must sacrifice her personal inclinations to the good of her family; but a peasant's daughter should marry a man of her own age and fancy, that the children may be stalwart tillers of the field. My advice is, that pretty Isabella should marry the man of her heart, and her father be taught not to ape his betters, in arranging marriages of convenience."

"And if you really think, reverend father," began the elder de Guzman, hesitatingly, "that it would imperil the girl's soul, and bring down God's vengeance on the parents—"

His voice shook with agitation. Don Ignácio shot a keen and warning glance into his face, and said, hastily:

"Of course, this is a case by itself, and no precedent for others. In general, a girl should be guided by her family, especially if her wishes turn toward a man she is bound from her birth to hate and avoid. As I said before, the rule for a peasant's daughter is no rule for a Señorita de Guzman. Do not you say so, father?"

"Yes, I suppose so, my son," replied the elder de Guzman, dejectedly. "But it is an awful thing to destroy the soul of your own child."

"An awful thing," repeated the prior, solemnly. "And although, as a general thing, I would be the last to encourage filial disobedience, I really feel that, in this case, I am saving the father from a great sin, and doing God's will, in preventing this unseemly marriage. Do you agree with me, señors?"

"Entirely, reverend father," replied both cavaliers; and Don Ignácio added:

"And why not have the nuptials celebrated, this very day, in our presence? I will give away the bride myself, or no, I will be Roberto's best

man; and my father may represent Lopez, who will not probably be present."

"It will be very condescending and gracious of you, señors," replied the monk, quietly, "and I will see if it can be arranged. I will go down to the farm-house with you, directly, and have a word with Isabella, who is a prisoner, since her escapade."

"What is that?" asked Ignacio, keenly, and the prior briefly recounted the flight out of the window, and the visit to the fair, the reception, and the imprisonment of the fair Isabella.

"This settles my opinion," said Don Alphonso. "After such an imprudence as that, no man, except the favored one, ought to marry the girl: and if the old miller is still anxious to do so, he must be a very vile fellow, and should properly be disappointed."

Leaving his guests, for a few moments, prior John now hastened to the cell, where Rafaclo was pacing angrily up and down, chafing at his imprisonment, and making a dozen plans, in a minute, for carrying on his enterprise.

The monk gazed at him, with an indulgent smile, remembering, perhaps, some passages of his own not long-past youth, in the days before the tonsure had set its seal upon his head.

"Listen, my son," said he, kindly. "I have it in my mind to do a doubtful and venturesome thing, in the hope that it is for the real benefit and salvation of two of my Master's children, who have appealed to me for help. Can you promise, on your part, that the future shall show me to have done well? Would you be a good, faithful, Christian husband to Carmita de Guzman, if I made her your wife?"

"I promise," was the reply, "on my knightly honor, if I may wed the Señorita de Guzman, to be, my life long, a faithful, kind, and Christian husband to her, so help me God!"

"I believe you, my son," said the prior, heartily. "Now then, listen attentively to me."

Half-an-hour later, the prior, accompanied by Don Alphonso de Guzman, a lay brother, and Cherubino, took his way through rain, and wind, and the deep clay-mud of that region, to the house of Lopez. Then, while Señor de Guzman visited his daughter, whom he found in a more mutinous condition even than when they parted, the night before, the prior first talked apart with the farmer, a bull-headed, violent fellow, but still very amenable to churchly discipline, especially to the authority of the prior of San Paolo, of which house he and his forbears had held their farm for a century, or more. The interview was a sharp, if not a long one, and when it ended, prior John wiped his heated face, with a smile of

triumph. Miguel Lopez looked more conquered than convinced, and repeated, anxiously:

"And you will build a mill, and make me miller for life, and Roberto after me?"

"I have promised it, my son."

"You will build it, at once, I think you said?"

"As soon as the spring opens."

"And you will forgive me the fifty pesos, still due of rent."

"We forgive you all your worldly debts to the convent of San Paolo, my son, and when next you come to confession, all your ghostly debts as well, including the promise-breaking to Gaspardo Deluzo."

"Yes, yes, and you will never let him suppose that I knew and consented to the marriage, reverend father? He must think that the girl cheated me, and ran away."

"Miguel Lopez, what I have promised, I have promised; and it is far wiser for you to trust me altogether, than to seek to bind me."

The voice of authority was not to be withstood, and Miguel, clumsily muttering apologies, withdrew, and presently returned, bringing with him, the culprit, Isabella, who, at sight of her god-father, fell upon both knees, and covered her face, expecting some rebuke equal to the unusual event of his visiting her father's house. The father withdrew, and then the priest, first addressing a homily upon the duty of filial obedience, and maidenly decorum, to poor Isabella, suddenly changed his tone and words; and the girl, lifting her handsome, brown face, and great dark eyes, in utter astonishment at what she heard, finally clasped her hands in an ecstasy of joy, and exclaimed:

"You will consent, father! You will marry me to Roberto! My own father is willing! Oh, Madre de Dios, what has brought about this blessed change?"

"Listen!" replied the prior, repressing her ardor, with a motion of his hand: "This indulgence, upon my part, demands obedience on yours; and I have something for you to do, which I will now explain."

If Isabella had already raised her eyes in wonder, she presently opened them to their full size, and this was not trifling: she even added a generous aperture of mouth, displaying two rows of beautiful teeth: all which further testified to her astonishment and absorption.

"Then, child," said the prior, finishing his communication. "You see that you are to be trusted in weighty matters; do you think yourself equal to managing them?"

"Oh, padre, yes," exclaimed the girl.

"Now, tell the señorita what I have said," he

said, after a pause, "and that I will receive her and you, for confession, in the public church, just after the angelus. She can tell her nurse that she is coming to confession. The nurse could not object to that. Let me see the old woman myself. I will make her come to church. And do you, when she returns, give her a good glass of aguardiente, that she may sleep soundly, to-night."

"Yes, father, I understand all," said Isabella, recovering her spirits, and bowing her head to receive her god-father's blessing, before going to find Bettina.

Later in the day, after dinner, the prior paused for a little conversation, and Don Ignacio, gayly addressing him, asked,

"And when are the nuptials, father?"

"At midnight, my son," replied the monk, confidentially. "It must be thus late, that the bride may leave home unsuspected, and also that there may be a mass, as she piously desires. I depend upon you, Señor de Guzman, to give away the bride."

"Yes, if you assure me that it is a pious work, and one justified by spiritual authority," said the elder de Guzman, with a little hesitation. His thin, dark face, meantime, as the prior noticed, bore the marks of some severe internal disquiet and struggle.

"I do think, señor," replied the prior, gravely, "that in this case, if in no other, the course I am pursuing, and in which I ask your help, is perfectly justifiable."

"Then I yield my private judgment, and will do whatever you desire," said the don, with a sigh of relief.

His son, however, looking at him askance, muttered:

"Not that this would do as precedent, in the case of a noble doña, marrying for the benefit of her family."

"And perhaps losing her own soul and theirs," replied Don Alphonso, hesitatingly, in the same tone. The prior said nothing.

The angelus bell rang out, over wild sierra and fertile valley, over brawling river, and quiet field, and was heard even down the deep valley-road, and around the gray stone walls of Miguel Lopez squat farm-house. The storm had abated, and it no longer seemed extraordinary that the Señorita de Guzman, attended by her nurse and the two muchachos of the house, should proceed, on donkeys and on foot, to the neighboring church; and afterward kneel, in turn, at the confessional, where the prior himself heard Carmita and Isabella, while he deputed another monk to listen to Bettina and Dolores, whose

needs were not upon that occasion so peculiar, or imperative.

All the offices were now said. The monks, with the exception of the prior, and father Peter, who had been necessarily admitted into the secret, were safe in their cells, and would remain there, until the bell for prime should arouse them. The Señors de Guzman, awakened from the brief slumber recommended by the prior, followed father Peter to the chapel, and found the bridal party already assembled at the altar, the bride veiled from head to foot in white lace, an heirloom in the family of Lopez, and two other veiled and muffled female figures standing beside her. The bridegroom, a stalwart young fellow, his face almost hidden in a luxuriant beard, stood at the other side, with his best man. The latter, as the de Guzmans entered the lower end of the church, knelt, bowing his face upon the altar rail, as if in private prayer.

The church was lighted only by the two candles upon the altar; and Don Ignacio, as he came up the nave, stumbled and nearly fell, causing a clatter, at which the bridegroom turned and looked toward him, displaying his face fully. One of the bridesmaids also pushed aside her veiling mantilla, showing the merry, brown face of Dolores, apparently not unwilling to be seen: in fact she rather seemed, coquetishly, to invite attention from Don Ignacio's bold, black eyes.

"A good-looking muchacha that, padre," whispered he, to father Peter, "and, not an ill-looking fellow. Is that Roberto?"

"The bridegroom and his friend," whispered the monk, hurriedly. "Kneel here, señor, if you please; and you, señor, who give away the bride, follow me."

So saying, he led the elder cavalier into the chancel, leaving Ignacio at the step, where, carelessly kneeling, he occupied himself in making eyes at Dolores, who, nothing loth, returned the glances, with interest.

Father Peter disappeared in the sacristy, whence he presently returned, followed by the prior, who immediately began the marriage service, the whole group of young people standing up together, and so mingled with each other, that Ignacio did not see that the bride's hand, given by his father to the priest, was placed, not in that of the bearded mozo, but in that of his companion. The whole ceremony was so hurried, and the dim light so baffling, that, when the whole was over, and the prior solemnly pronounced the wedded pair man and wife, with an anathema upon whomsoever should disjoin them, neither Don Alphonso, nor his son, could have

sworn which of the three women and two men really were the wedded ones.

The mass went on, and both cavaliers knelt to receive the sacrament, in company with all the bridal party. When all was over, the prior retired to unvest himself, but presently returned to the body of the church, pale and agitated, in spite of his air of decision and authority.

Going up to Don Alphonso, who stood, with bowed head, and contracted brows, deep in some bitter thought, he laid a hand upon his shoulder, and said :

"Señor, you know how the prophet Nathan came to King David, and told him of the rich man, who would retain the lamb that he loved, and sacrifice his neighbor's; and how, when the king exclaimed in indignation at his brother's hardness and selfishness, the prophet said: 'Thou art the man,' and so out of his own mouth convicted him. You know the story?"

"Yes, father, I know it."

"And did the prophet do well, think you?"

"Surely, yes. He was a man of God."

"Then, my son, you cannot be angry, that I have imitated him. You see the wrong to his own soul and to hers, that Miguel Lopez would have done, in sacrificing his daughter to a hoary villain, when her heart was given to a worthy youth, in every way suited to her; and yet you would go and do the very same thing, with your own daughter."

The old man bowed his head, upon his breast, and groaned. The prior looked at him, and raising his own commanding figure to its full height, and looking steadfastly, for a moment, at the crucifix upon the altar, he beckoned the newly married couple to approach, and kneel at Don Alphonso's feet, while he said, solemnly, almost sternly :

"Behold then, how I have led you, my son, to square your actions with your convictions. 'Thou art the man,' and these are your children."

The veil dropped from the pale and frightened face of the bride.

"Carmita!" exclaimed the father.

Don Ignacio, roused by the cry from his flirtation with Dolores, to whom he had been whispering, pressed forward, and clenching his hand upon his dagger-hilt, exclaimed, as he saw the bridegroom's face :

"Thousand devils, what is this? Rafaelo de Orvieto, and Carmita—"

"His wife," quietly finished the prior, making the sign of the cross between the two young men, who eyed each other, the one in furious anger, hardly restrained by place or time, the other, with manly courage, not inviting a quarrel, yet never shrinking from it.

It were too long to tell all that passed, in the next hour, or to minutely describe the useless anger, and stormy reproaches of Ignacio de Guzman, or the last struggles, in the father's heart, between baffled pride and ambition, and the fond love of his darling daughter, mingled with a certain vague dread of the ghostly consequences to himself of forcing her into an unblessed marriage.

In the end, the better feelings conquered, and when once he had yielded, and placed his hand in blessing on Carmita's head, it was of small consequence that Ignacio, stormily swearing that he never would be reconciled to the marriage, or meet his ancient foe as a new made friend and brother, clattered out of the church, clanging his rapier against the stone floor and posts, and early next morning, left the monastery alone.

"And now, dear friends," said the prior, when all was happily settled for the gentlefolk. "Now, let us do a work of charity, and unite in marriage this pair of humble lovers, who have helped their betters to a bliss they also aspire to share. Don Alphonso, will you still condescend to give away the bride?"

The grandee smilingly consented, and in a few moments more, two happy brides, two proud bridegrooms, the contented prior, and the three-parts reconciled father, left the church.

Father Peter remained to extinguish the lights, and moralize, after his fashion, on the wonderful events of the last four and twenty hours.

THE WHITE SPARROW.

BY JANE WEAVER.

No more common complaint is to be heard now-a-days, from the lips of housewives, than that of the laziness and unthrifty habits of domestic servants. Mothers and grandmothers are often wont to tell the young housekeeper that matters were otherwise in *their* days. Yet it has sometimes occurred to us, whether the fault may not lie as much in the degenerate habits of the masters and mistresses of the present generation, as from any fault peculiar to their dependants. Were the lady of the house more frequently to rise at five or six in the morning, as in the "good old days of lang syne," perchance she would not so often have to complain that rooms were carelessly swept, that work was left undone, or fires lighted too late.

In most country parts of Germany there passes current amongst the people this proverb—

"He who would thrive
Must the white sparrow see."

And the following is the history of its origin.

There was a certain farmer, with whom every thing seemed to grow worse from year to year. His cattle died one by one—the produce of his land was not half of that which it ought to be—in fact, all his property was, to use a familiar expression, "going to the dogs." Scarcely a week passed by that either the tax-gatherer or the pawnbroker did not come to his window, and, addressing him with a courteous bow, said, "I am really very sorry, Mr. Backwards, to be obliged to put you to inconvenience, but I am compelled to do my duty." His old friends also tried their best to do *their* duty by him—they advised, they entreated, and they helped him, but all in vain; and one after another gave him up in despair, declaring with a sigh that "as for poor Backwards, there was no use in trying to help him—he was *past* being helped."

He had one friend, however, whose heart was in the right place, and who was not only a good man, but a very prudent and clear-sighted man. This friend thought he would not give Mr. Backwards up altogether, without making one more attempt to save him; so one day, he led the conversation, as though accidentally, to the subject of sparrows, related many anecdotes of these

birds, and observed how much they had multiplied of late, and how very cunning and voracious they had become.

Backwards shook his head gravely in answer to this observation, and said, "They were indeed most destructive creatures—for his part, he had not the least doubt that it was entirely owing to them his harvest had been of late years so very unproductive."

To this conjecture, the good friend made no rejoinder; but after a moment's pause he continued the conversation by inquiring, "Neighbor, have you ever seen a white sparrow?"

"No," replied he; "the sparrows which alight in my fields are all quite grey."

"That is very probable," rejoined his friend, "the habits of the white sparrow are peculiar to itself. Only one comes into the world every year, and being so different from its fellows, the other sparrows take a dislike to it, and peck at it when it appears amongst them. For this reason it seeks its food early in the morning, before the rest of the feathered tribe are astir, and then goes back to its nest for the rest of the day."

"That is very strange!" exclaimed Backwards. "I must really try and get a sight of that sparrow, and if possible I will catch it too."

On the morning which followed this conversation, the farmer rose with the sun, and sallied forth into his fields; he walked round his farm—searched his farm-yard in every corner, examined the roofs of his garners, and the trees of his orchard, to see whether he could discover any traces of the wonderful white sparrow. But the white sparrow, to the great disappointment of the farmer, would not show itself, or stir from its imaginary nest. What vexed the farmer, however, still more was, that although the sun stood high in the heavens by the time he had completed his rounds, not one of the farm-laborers were astir—they, too, seemed resolved not to leave their nests. Meanwhile, the cattle in their stalls were bellowing with hunger, and not a soul was near to give them their fodder.

He was reflecting on the disadvantages of this state of things, when suddenly he perceived a lad coming out of the house carrying a sack of wheat on his shoulders. The boy seemed to be

in great haste to get out of the precincts of the farm; and Backwards soon perceived that his steps were not bent toward the mill, but toward a public house, where Caspar had unhappily a long score to pay. He hastened after the astonished youth, who believed his master to be still in the enjoyment of his morning nap, and quickly relieved him of his burden.

The farmer next bent his steps to the cow-house, and peeping in to see whether the white sparrow had perchance taken refuge there, he discovered to his dismay that the milkmaid was handing a liberal portion of milk through the window to her neighbor to mix with her morning cup of coffee.

"A pretty sort of housekeeping this is!" thought the farmer to himself, as he hastened to his wife's apartment and roused her from her slumbers. "As sure as my name is Backwards!" he exclaimed, in a somewhat angry tone, "there must be an end of these lazy habits: everything is going wrong for the want of some one to look after them! So far as I am concerned, at all events," thought the good farmer to himself, "I will rise every day at the same hour I rose this morning, and then I shall soon get my farm cleared of those who do not

intend to do their duty properly. Besides, who knows but some fine morning or other I may succeed in catching the white sparrow?"

Days and weeks passed on. The farmer adhered to his resolution; but he soon forgot the white sparrow, and only looked after his cattle and his corn-fields. Soon everything around him wore a flourishing aspect, and men began to observe that Backwards now well deserved to be called Forwards. In due course of time, his old friend again came to spend the day with him, and inquired in a humorous tone, "Well, my good fellow, how are you getting on now? have you yet succeeded in catching a glimpse of the white sparrow?"

The farmer only replied to this question by a smile; and then, holding out his hand to his old friend, he said, "God bless you, Herder! you have saved me and my family from ruin."

Often, in after years, when Backwards was a prosperous man, respected by his neighbors, and beloved by his well-ordered household, he was wont to relate this history of his early life; and thus by degrees the saying passed into a proverb,

"He who would thrive must see the white sparrow."